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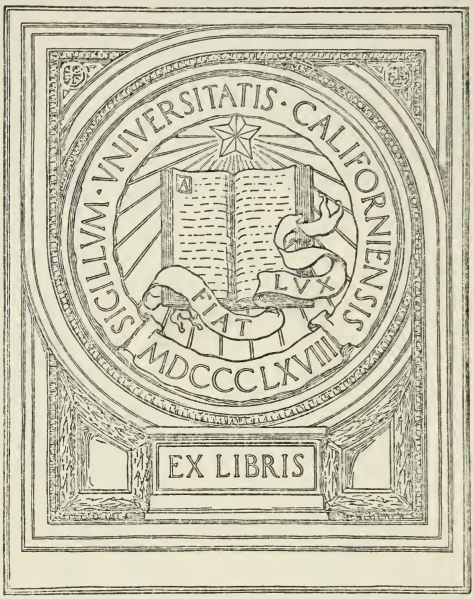

THE GIFT OF
MAY TREAT MORRISON
IN MEMORY OF
ALEXANDER F MORRISON

ARNE

EARLY TALES AND SKETCHES

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WORKS OF

BJÖRNSTJERNE BJÖRNSON

PATRIOTS EDITION

v. 4

ARNE

EARLY TALES AND SKETCHES

Translated from the Norse

By

RASMUS B. ANDERSON

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK
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PREFACE.

"ARNE" was written in 1858, one year later than "Synnöve Solbakken," and is thought by many to be Björnson's best story, though it is, in my opinion, surpassed in simplicity of style and delicate analysis of motives, feelings, and character by "A Happy Boy," his third long story, the translation of which is now in progress, and which will follow this volume.

Norway's most eminent composers have written music for many of Björnson's poems, and made them favorite songs, not only with the cultivated classes, but also with the common people. To the songs in "Arne" melodies were composed by Björnson's brilliant cousin, Rikard Nordraak, who died in 1865, only twenty-three years old, but who had already won a place as one of Norway's greatest composers.

With a view of popularizing these melodies in this country, all the poems have been given in precisely the same metre and rhyme as the original, and those caring to know how the tunes are supposed to have sounded on the lips of Arne are referred to "The Norway Music Album," edited by Auber Forestier and myself, and published by Oliver Ditson & Co. of

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Boston. In it will be found, together with the original and English words, Rikard Nordraak's music to the following five songs from "Arne": —

1. "Oh, my pet lamb, lift your head," from chapter v.

2. "It was such a pleasant, sunny day," from chapter viii.

3. "The tree's early leaf-buds were bursting their brown," from chapter xii.

4. "Oh how I wonder what I should see
Over the lofty mountains,"[1] from chapter xiv.

5. "He went in the forest the whole day long," from chapter xiv.

Mr. Björnson returned to Norway in May, 1881; he was welcomed with enthusiasm, and on the 17th of the same month, Norway's natal day, he delivered the oration at the dedication of the Wergeland Monument to a gathering of more than ten thousand people. His visit to America was a brilliant success. His addresses to his countrymen in America were chiefly on the constitutional struggle of Norway, on which subject an article by him will be found in the February (1881) issue of "Scribner's Monthly." As a souvenir of his pleasant sojourn among us, I will here attempt an English translation of the poem "Olaf Trygvason" with which he usually greeted his hearers at his lectures. It is one of his most popular songs.

[1] To this there will also be found in the Album a melody by Halfdan Kjerulf.

Spreading sails o'er the North Sea speed;
High on deck stands at dawn, indeed,
Erling Skjalgson from Sole.
Spying o'er the sea towards Denmark:
"Wherefore comes not Olaf Trygvason?"

Six and fifty the dragons are;
Sails are furled . . . . toward Denmark stare
Sun-scorchèd men . . . . then rises:
"Where stays the King's Long Serpent?
Wherefore comes not Olaf Trygvason?"

But when sun on the second day
Saw the watery, mastless way,
Like a great storm it sounded:
"Where stays the King's Long Serpent?
Wherefore comes not Olaf Trygvason?"

Quiet, quiet, in that same hour
Stood they all; for with endless power,
Groaning, the sea was splashing:
"Taken the King's Long Serpent!
Fallen is Olaf Trygvason!"

Thus for more than an hundred years
Sounds in every seaman's ears,
Chiefly in moon-lit watches:
"Taken the King's Long Serpent!
Fallen is Olaf Trygvason!"

The reader will not fail to be reminded by this song by Björnson of Longfellow's "Saga of King Olaf" (the Musician's Tale), in his "Tales of a Wayside Inn," and especially of those beautiful poems in this collection, "The Building of the Long Serpent," and "The Crew of the Long Serpent."

Hoping the translation of these stories and songs

will enable the reader to appreciate in some degree the secret of Björnson's great popularity in the fair land that lies beneath the eternal snow and the unsetting sun, I now offer "Arne" to the American public.

RASMUS B. ANDERSON.

ASGARD, MADISON, WIS.,
August, 1881.

CHAPTER I.

THERE was a deep gorge between two mountains; through this gorge a large, full stream flowed heavily over a rough and stony bottom. Both sides were high and steep, and so one side was bare; but close to its foot, and so near the stream that the latter sprinkled it with moisture every spring and autumn, stood a group of fresh-looking trees, gazing upward and onward, yet unable to advance this way or that.

"What if we should clothe the mountain?" said the juniper one day to the foreign oak, to which it stood nearer than all the others. The oak looked down to find out who it was that spoke, and then it looked up again without deigning a reply. The river rushed along so violently that it worked itself into a white foam; the north wind had forced its way through the gorge and shrieked in the clefts of the rocks; the naked mountain, with its great weight, hung heavily over and felt cold. "What if we should clothe the mountain?"

said the juniper to the fir on the other side. "If anybody is to do it, I suppose it must be we," said the fir, taking hold of its beard and glancing toward the birch. "What do you think?" But the birch peered cautiously up at the mountain, which hung over it so threateningly that it seemed as if it could scarcely breathe. "Let us clothe it in God's name!" said the birch. And so, though there were but these three, they undertook to clothe the mountain. The juniper went first.

When they had gone a little way, they met the heather. The juniper seemed as though about to go past it. "Nay, take the heather along," said the fir. And the heather joined them. Soon it began to glide on before the juniper. "Catch hold of me," said the heather. The juniper did so, and where there was only a wee crevice, the heather thrust in a finger, and where it first had placed a finger, the juniper took hold with its whole hand. They crawled and crept along, the fir laboring on behind, the birch also. "This is well worth doing," said the birch.

But the mountain began to ponder on what manner of insignificant objects these might be that were clambering up over it. And after it had been considering the matter a few hundred

years it sent a little brook down to inquire. It was yet in the time of the spring freshets, and the brook stole on until it reached the heather. "Dear, dear heather, cannot you let me pass; I am so small." The heather was very busy; only raised itself a little and pressed onward. In, under, and onward went the brook. "Dear, dear juniper, cannot you let me pass; I am so small." The juniper looked sharply at it; but if the heather had let it pass, why, in all reason, it must do so too. Under it and onward went the brook; and now came to the spot where the fir stood puffing on the hill-side. "Dear, dear fir, cannot you let me pass; I am really so small," said the brook, — and it kissed the fir's foot and made itself so very sweet. The fir became bashful at this, and let it pass. But the birch raised itself before the brook asked it. "Hi, hi, hi!" said the brook and grew. "Ha, ha, ha!" said the brook and grew. "Ho, ho, ho!" said the brook, and flung the heather and the juniper and the fir and the birch flat on their faces and backs, up and down these great hills. The mountain sat for many hundred years musing on whether it had not smiled a little that day.

It was plain enough: the mountain did not want to be clad. The heather fretted over

this until it grew green again, and then it started forward. "Fresh courage!" said the heather.

The juniper had half raised itself to look at the heather, and continued to keep this position, until at length it stood upright. It scratched its head and set forth again, taking such a vigorous foothold that it seemed as though the mountain must feel it. "If you will not have me, then I will have you." The fir crooked its toes a little to find out whether they were whole, then lifted one foot, found it whole, then the other, which proved also to be whole, then both of them. It first investigated the ground it had been over, next where it had been lying, and finally where it should go. After this it began to wend its way slowly along, and acted just as though it had never fallen. The birch had become most wretchedly soiled, but now rose up and made itself tidy. Then they sped onward, faster and faster, upward and on either side, in sunshine and in rain. "What in the world can this be?" said the mountain, all glittering with dew, as the summer sun shone down on it, — the birds sang, the wood-mouse piped, the hare hopped along, and the ermine hid itself and screamed.

Then the day came when the heather could

peep with one eye over the edge of the mountain. "Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear!" said the heather, and away it went. "Dear me! what is it the heather sees?" said the juniper, and moved on until it could peer up. "Oh dear, oh dear!" it shrieked, and was gone. "What is the matter with the juniper to-day?" said the fir, and took long strides onward in the heat of the sun. Soon it could raise itself on its toes and peep up. "Oh dear!" Branches and needles stood on end in wonderment. It worked its way forward, came up, and was gone. "What is it all the others see, and not I?" said the birch; and, lifting well its skirts, it tripped after. It stretched its whole head up at once. "Oh, — oh! — is not here a great forest of fir and heather, of juniper and birch, standing upon the table-land waiting for us?" said the birch; and its leaves quivered in the sunshine so that the dew trembled. "Aye, this is what it is to reach the goal!" said the juniper.

CHAPTER II.

Up on the hill-top it was that Arne was born. His mother's name was Margit, and she was the only child at the houseman's place, — Kampen.[1] Once, in her eighteenth year, she stayed too long at a dance; her companions had left her, and so Margit thought that the way home would be just as long whether she waited until the dancing was over or not. And thus it happened that she kept her seat until the fiddler, known as Nils the tailor, suddenly laid aside his fiddle, as was his wont when drink took possession of him, let others troll the tune, seized the prettiest girl, moved his foot as evenly as the rhythm of a song, and with his boot-heel took the hat from the head of the tallest person present. "Ho!" said he.

When Margit went home that evening, the moon-beams played on the snow with most wondrous beauty. After she had reached her bed-chamber she was moved to look out once more.

[1] The top of a hill is called in Norwegian "Kamp," and the houseman's place took its name from its situation.

She took off her boddice, but remained standing with it in her hand. Then she felt that she was cold, closed the door hastily, undressed, and nestled in under the robe. That night Margit dreamed about a great red cow that had wandered into the field. She went to drive it out, but though she tried hard, she could not stir from the spot; the cow stood calmly grazing there until it grew plump and well fed, and every now and then it looked at her, with large, heavy eyes.

The next time there was a dance in the parish Margit was present. She cared little for dancing that evening; she kept her seat to listen to the music, and it seemed strange to her that there were not others also who preferred this. But when the evening had worn on, the fiddler arose and wanted to dance. All at once he went directly to Margit Kampen. She scarcely knew what she was about, but she danced with Nils the tailor.

Soon the weather grew warm, and there was no more dancing. That spring Margit took such interest in a little lamb that had fallen ill, that her mother almost thought she was overdoing it.

"It is only a little lamb," said the mother.

"Yes, but it is ill," replied Margit.

It was some time since she had been to church; she wished to have her mother go, she said, and some one must be at home. One Sunday, later in the summer, the weather was so fine that the hay could well be left out for twenty-four hours, and the mother said that now they surely might both go. Margit could not reasonably object to this, and got ready for church; but when they were so far on their way that they could hear the church-bells, she burst into tears. The mother grew deathly pale: but they went on, the mother in advance, Margit following, listened to the sermon, joined in all the hymns to the very last, followed the prayer, and heard the bell ring before they left. But when they were seated in the family-room at home again, the mother took Margit's face between her hands and said: —

"Hide nothing from me, my child."

There came another winter when Margit did not dance. But Nils the tailor fiddled, took more strong drink than ever, and always, toward the close of the evening, swung the prettiest girl at the party. In those days, it was told as a certain fact that he could marry whom he pleased among the daughters of the first gard-owners in the parish; some added

that Eli Böen herself had courted him for her daughter Birgit, who was madly in love with him.

But just at that time an infant of the houseman's daughter at Kampen was brought to baptism ; it was christened Arne, and tailor Nils was spoken of as its father.

The evening of the same day Nils was at a large wedding ; there he got drunk. He would not play, but danced all the time, and scarcely brooked having others on the floor. But when he crossed to Birgit Böen and asked her to dance, she declined. He gave a short laugh, turned on his heel, and caught hold of the first girl he encountered. She resisted. He looked down ; it was a little dark maiden who had been sitting gazing fixedly at him, and who was now pale. Bowing lightly over her, he whispered, —

" Will you not dance with *me*, Karen ? "

She made no reply. He asked once more. Then she answered in a whisper, as he had asked, —

" *That* dance might go farther than I wished."

He drew slowly back, but once in the middle of the floor, he made a spring and danced the

halling [1] alone. No one else was dancing; the others stood looking on in silence.

Afterwards he went out in the barn, and there he lay down and wept.

Margit kept at home with the little boy. She heard about Nils, how he went from dance to dance, and she looked at the child and wept, — looked at him again and was happy. The first thing she taught him was to say papa; but this she dared not do when the mother, or the grandmother, as she was henceforth called, chanced to be near. The result of this was that it was the grandmother whom the boy called papa. It cost Margit much to break him of this, and thus she fostered in him an early shrewdness. He was not very large before he knew that Nils the tailor was his father, and when he reached the age in which the romantic acquires a flavor, he became also aware what sort of a man tailor Nils was. The grandmother had strictly forbidden even the mention of his name; what she mainly strove for was to have the houseman's place, Kampen, become an independent gard, so that her daughter and her boy might be free from care. She availed herself of the gard-owner's poverty, effected the purchase o.

[1] A popular dance in two-fourths time, described in this chapter

the place, paid off a portion of the money each year, and managed the business like a man, for she had been a widow for fourteen years. Kampen was a large place, and had been extended until now it fed four cows, sixteen sheep, and a horse in which she was half owner.

Nils the tailor meanwhile took to roving about the parish; his business had fallen off, partly because he felt less interest in it, partly also because he was not liked as before. He gave, therefore, more time to fiddling; this led oftener to drinking and thence to fighting and evil days. There were those who had heard him say he was unhappy.

Arne might have been about six years old, when one winter day he was frolicking in the bed, whose coverlet he had up for a sail, while he was steering with a ladle. The grandmother sat spinning in the room, absorbed in her own thoughts, and nodded occasionally as though she would make a fixed fact of something she was thinking about. The boy knew that he was unheeded, and he fell to singing, just as he had learned it, the rough, wild song about tailor Nils: —

'Unless 't was only yesterday hither first you came,
You 've surely heard already of Nils the tailor's fame.

'Unless 't was but this morning you came among us first,
You 've heard how he knocked over tall Johan Knutson Kirst.

'How, in his famous barn-fight with Ola Stor-Johann,
He said, 'Bring down your porridge when we two fight again.'

'That fighting fellow, Bugge, a famous man was he:
His name was known all over fjord and fell and sea.

''Now, choose the place, you tailor, where I shall knock you down,
And then I 'll spit upon it, and there I 'll lay your crown.'

''Ah, only come so near, I may catch your scent, my man,
Your bragging hurts nobody; don't dream it ever can.'

"The first round was a poor one, and neither man could beat;
But both kept in their places, and steady on their feet.

"The second round, poor Bugge was beaten black and blue.
'Little Bugge, are you tired? It 's going hard with you.'

"The third round, Bugge tumbled, and bleeding there he lay.
Now, Bugge, where 's your bragging?' 'Bad luck to me to-day!'"[1]

More the boy did not sing; but there were two other stanzas which his mother was not likely to have taught him: —

"Have you seen a tree cast its shadow on yesterday's snow?
Have you seen how Nils does his smiles on the girls bestow?

"Have you looked at Nils when to dance he just commences?
Come, my girl, you must go; it is too late, when you 've lost your senses."

These two stanzas the grandmother knew, and they came all the more distinctly into her mind because they were not sung. She said

[1] Translated by Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.

nothing to the boy; but to the mother she said, "Teach the boy well about your own shame; do not forget the last verses."

Nils the tailor was so broken down by drink that he was no longer the man he had been, and some people thought his end could not be far distant.

It so happened that two American gentlemen were visiting in the parish, and having heard that a wedding was going on in the vicinity, wanted to attend it, that they might learn the customs of the country. Nils was playing there. They gave each a dollar to the fiddler, and asked for a halling; but no one would come forward to dance it, however much it was urged. Several begged Nils himself to dance. "He was best, after all," they said. He refused, but the request became still more urgent, and finally unanimous. This was what he wanted. He gave his fiddle to another player, took off his jacket and cap, and stepped smiling into the middle of the room. He was followed by the same eager attention as of old, and this gave him his old strength. The people crowded closely together, those who were farthest back climbing upon tables and benches. Some of the girls were perched up higher than all the rest, and foremost among

these — a tall girl with sunny brown hair of a varying tint, with blue eyes deeply set beneath a strong forehead, a large mouth that often smiled, drawing a little to one side as it did so — was Birgit Böen. Nils saw her, as he glanced up at the beam. The music struck up, a deep silence followed, and he began. He dashed forward along the floor, his body inclining to one side, half aslant, keeping time to the fiddle. Crouching down, he balanced himself, now on one foot, now on the other, flung his legs crosswise under him, sprang up again, stood as though about to make a fling, and then moved on aslant as before. The fiddle was handled by skillful fingers, and more and more fire was thrown into the tune. Nils threw his head farther and farther back, and suddenly his boot-heel touched the beam, sending the dust from the ceiling in showers over them all. The people laughed and shouted about him; the girls stood well-nigh breathless. The tune hurrahed with the rest, stimulating him anew with more and more strongly-marked accents, nor did he resist the exciting influences. He bent forward, hopped along in time to the music, made ready apparently for a fling, but only as a hoax, and then moved on, his body aslant as before; and when

he seemed the least prepared for it, his boot-heel thundered against the beam again and again, whereupon he turned summersaults forwards and backwards in the air, landing each time erect on his feet. He broke off abruptly, and the tune, running through some wild variations, worked its way down to a deep tone in the bass, where it quivered and vibrated, and died away with a long-drawn stroke of the bow. The crowd dispersed, and loud, eager conversation, mingled with shouts and exclamations, broke the silence. Nils stood leaning against the wall, and the American gentlemen went over to him, with their interpreter, and each gave him five dollars.

The Americans talked a little with the interpreter, whereupon the latter asked Nils if he would go with them as their servant; he should have whatever wages he wanted. "Whither?" asked Nils. The people crowded about them as closely as possible. "Out into the world," was the reply. "When?" asked Nils, and looking around with a shining face, he caught Birgit Böen's eyes, and did not let them go again. "In a week, when we come back here," was the answer. "It is possible I will be ready," replied Nils, weighing his two five-dollar pieces. He had rested one arm on the shoulder

of a man standing near him, and it trembled so that the man wanted to help him to the bench.

"It is nothing," replied Nils, made some wavering steps across the floor, then some firm ones, and, turning, asked for a spring-dance.[1]

All the girls had come to the front. Casting a long, lingering look about him, he went straightway to one of them in a dark skirt; it was Birgit Böen. He held out his hand, and she gave him both of hers; then he laughed, drew back, caught hold of the girl beside her, and danced away with perfect abandon. The blood coursed up in Birgit's neck and face. A tall man, with a mild countenance, was standing directly behind her; he took her by the hand and danced off after Nils. The latter saw this, and — it might have been only through heedlessness — he danced so hard against them that the man and Birgit were sent reeling over and fell heavily on the floor. Shouting and laughter arose about them. Birgit got up at last, went aside, and wept bitterly.

The man with the mild face rose more slowly and went straight over to Nils, who was still dancing. "You had better stop a little," said the man. Nils did not hear, and then the man

[1] A popular dance, in three-fourths time.

took him by the arm. Nils tore himself away and looked at him. "I do not know you," said he, with a smile. "No; but you shall learn to know me," said the man with the mild face, and with this he struck Nils a blow over one eye. Nils, who was wholly unprepared for this, was plunged heavily across the sharp-edged hearth-stone, and when he promptly tried to rise, he found that he could not; his back was broken.

At Kampen a change had taken place. The grandmother had been growing very feeble of late, and when she realized this she strove harder than ever to save money enough to pay off the last installment on the gard. "Then you and the boy will have all you need," she said to her daughter. "And if you let any one come in and waste it for you, I will turn in my grave." During the autumn, too, she had the pleasure of being able to stroll up to the former head-gard with the last remaining portion of the debt, and happy was she when she had taken her seat again, and could say, "Now that is done!" But at that very time she was attacked by her last illness; she betook herself forthwith to her bed, and never rose again. Her daughter buried her in a vacant spot in the churchyard, and placed over her a handsome cross, whereon was inscribed her name and age,

with a verse from one of Kingo's[1] hymns. A fortnight after the grandmother was laid in her grave, her Sunday gown was made over into clothes for the boy, and when he put them on, he became as solemn as though he were his grandmother come back again. Of his own accord, he went to the book with big print and large clasps she had read and sung from every Sunday, opened it, and there inside found her spectacles. These the boy had never been permitted to touch during his grandmother's lifetime; now he timidly took them up, put them on his nose, and looked through them into the book. All was misty. "How strange," thought the boy, "it was through them grandmother could read the word of God." He held them high up toward the light to see what the matter was, and — the spectacles lay on the floor.

He was much alarmed, and when the door at that moment opened, it seemed to him as though his grandmother must be coming in, but it was his mother, and behind her, six men, who, with much tramping and noise, were bearing in a litter, which they placed in the middle of the floor. For a long time the door was left open, so that it grew cold in the room.

On the litter lay a man with dark hair and

[1] A Dane, the most noted psalmist of Scandinavia.

pale face; the mother moved about weeping. "Lay him carefully on the bed," she begged, herself lending a helping hand. But while the men were moving with him, something made a noise under their feet. "Oh, it is only grandmother's spectacles," thought the boy, but he did not say so.

CHAPTER III.

It was in the autumn, as before stated. A week after Nils the tailor was borne into Margit Kampen's home, there came word to him from the Americans that he must hold himself in readiness to start. He lay just then writhing under a terrible attack of pain, and, gnashing his teeth, he shrieked, "Let them go to hell!" Margit stood motionless, as though he had made no answer. He noticed this, and presently he repeated slowly and feebly, "Let them — go."

As the winter advanced, he improved so much that he was able to sit up, although his health was shattered for life. The first time he actually sat up, he took out his fiddle and tuned it, but became so agitated that he had to go to bed again. He grew very taciturn, but was not hard to get along with; and as time wore on, he taught the boy to read, and began to take work in at home. He never went out, and would not talk with those who dropped in to see him. At first Margit used to bring him the

parish news ; he was always gloomy afterwards, so she ceased to do so.

When spring had fairly set in, he and Margit would sit longer than usual talking together after the evening meal. The boy was then sent off to bed. Some time later in the spring their bans were published in church, after which they were quietly married.

He did his share of work in the fields now, and managed everything in a sensible, orderly way. Margit said to the boy, " There is both profit and pleasure in him. Now you must be obedient and good, that you may do your best for him."

Margit had remained tolerably stout through all her sorrow ; she had a ruddy face and very large eyes, which looked all the larger because there was a ring round them. She had full lips, a round face, and looked healthy and strong, although she was not very strong. At this period of her life, she was looking better than ever ; and she always sang when she was at work, as had ever been her wont.

One Sunday afternoon, father and son went out to see how the crops were thriving that year. Arne ran about his father, shooting with a bow and arrow. Nils had himself made them for the boy. Thus they passed on directly

up toward the road leading past the church and parsonage, down to what was called the broad valley. Nils seated himself on a stone by the roadside and fell to dreaming; the boy shot into the road and sprang after his arrow,— it was in the direction of the church. "Not too far away!" said the father. While the boy was playing there, he paused, as though listening. "Father, I hear music!" The father listened too; they heard the sounds of fiddling, almost drowned at times by loud shouts and wild uproar; but above all rose the steady rumbling of cart-wheels and the clatter of horses' feet; it was a bridal procession, wending its way home from church. "Come here, boy," shouted the father, and Arne knew by the tones of the voice that he must make haste. The father had hurriedly risen and hidden behind a large tree. The boy hastened after him. "Not here, over there!" cried the father, and the boy stepped behind an alder-copse. Already the carts were winding round the birch-grove; they came at a wild speed, the horses were white with foam, drunken people were crying and shouting; father and son counted cart after cart,— there were in all fourteen. In the first sat two fiddlers, and the wedding march sounded merrily through the

clear air, — a boy stood behind and drove. Afterwards came a crowned bride, who sat on a high seat and glittered in the sunshine ; she smiled, and her mouth drew to one side ; beside her sat a man clad in blue and with a mild face. The bridal train followed, the men sat on the women's laps ; small boys were sitting behind, drunken men were driving, — there were six people to one horse ; the man who presided at the feast came in the last cart, holding a keg of brandy on his lap. They passed by screaming and singing, and drove recklessly down the hill ; the fiddling, the voices, the rattling of wheels, lingered behind them in the dust ; the breeze bore up single shrieks, soon only a dull rumbling, and then nothing. Nils stood motionless ; there was a rustling behind him, he turned ; it was the boy who was creeping forward.

" Who was it, father ? " But the boy started, for his father's face was dreadful. Arne stood motionless waiting for an answer ; then he remained where he was because he got none. After some time he became impatient and ventured again. " Shall we go ? " Nils was still gazing after the bridal train, but he now controlled himself and started on. Arne followed after. He put an arrow into the bow, shot it

and ran. "Do not trample down the grass," said Nils gruffly. The boy let the arrow lie and came back. After a while he had forgotten this, and once when his father paused, he lay down and turned summersaults. "Do not trample down the grass, I say." Here Arne was seized by one arm, and lifted by it with such violence that it was almost put out of joint. Afterward, he walked quietly behind.

At the door Margit awaited them; she had just come in from the stable, where she had evidently had pretty hard work, for her hair was tumbled, her linen soiled, her dress likewise, but she stood in the door smiling. "A couple of the cows got loose and have been into mischief; now they are tied again."

"You might make yourself a little tidy on Sunday," said Nils, as he went past into the house.

"Yes, there is some sense in tidying up now that the work is done," said Margit, and followed him. She began to fix herself at once, and sang while she was doing so. Now Margit sang well, but sometimes there was a little huskiness in her voice.

"Stop that screaming," said Nils; he had thrown himself on his back across the bed. Margit stopped.

Then the boy came storming in. "There has come into the yard a great black dog, a dreadful looking" —

"Hold your tongue, boy," said Nils from the bed, and thrust out one foot to stamp on the floor with it. "A devilish noise that boy is always making," he muttered afterward, and drew his foot up again.

The mother held up a warning finger to the boy. "You surely must see that father is not in a good humor," she meant. "Will you not have some strong coffee with syrup in it?" said she; she wanted to put him in a good humor again. This was a drink the grandmother had liked, and the rest of them too. Nils did not like it at all, but had drunk it because the others did so. "Will you not have some strong coffee with syrup in it?" repeated Margit; for he had made no reply the first time. Nils raised himself up on both elbows and shrieked, 'Do you think I will pour down such slops?"

Margit was struck with surprise, and, taking the boy with her, went out.

They had a number of things to attend to outside, and did not come in before supper-time. Then Nils was gone. Arne was sent out into the field to call him, but found him nowhere. They waited until the supper was

nearly cold, then ate, and still Nils had not come. Margit became uneasy, sent the boy to bed, and sat down to wait. A little after midnight Nils appeared.

"Where have you been, dear?" asked she.

"That is none of your business," he answered, and slowly sat down on the bench.

He was drunk.

After this, Nils often went out in the parish, and always came home drunk. "I cannot stand it at home here with you," said he once when he came in. She tried gently to defend herself, and then he stamped on the floor and bade her be silent: if he was drunk, it was her fault; if he was wicked, it was her fault too; if he was a cripple and an unfortunate being for his whole life, why, she was to blame too, and that infernal boy of hers.

"Why were you always dangling after me?" said he, and wept. "What harm had I done you that you could not leave me in peace?"

"Lord have mercy on me!" said Margit. "Was it I who went after you?"

"Yes, it was!" he shrieked as he arose, and amid tears he continued: "You have succeeded in getting what you wanted. I drag myself about from tree to tree. I go every day and look at my own grave. But I could have lived

in splendor with the finest gard girl in the parish. I might have traveled as far as the sun goes, had not you and your damned boy put yourselves in my way."

She tried again to defend herself. "It was, at all events, not the boy's fault."

"If you do not hold your tongue, I will strike you!" — and he struck her.

After he had slept himself sober the next day, he was ashamed, and was especially kind to the boy. But soon he was drunk again, and then he struck the mother. At last he got to striking her almost every time he was drunk. The boy cried and lamented; then he struck him too. Sometimes his repentance was so deep that he felt compelled to leave the house. About this time his fondness for dancing revived. He began to go about fiddling as in former days, and took the boy with him to carry the fiddle-case. Thus Arne saw a great deal. The mother wept because he had to go along, but dared not say so to the father. "Hold faithfully to God, and learn nothing evil," she begged, and tenderly caressed her boy. But at the dances there was a great deal of diversion; at home with the mother there was none at all. Arne turned more and more from her and to the father; she saw this and was silent.

At the dances Arne learned many songs, and he sang them at home to his father; this amused the latter, and now and then the boy could even get him to laugh. This was so flattering to Arne that he exerted himself to learn as many songs as possible; soon he noticed what kind the father liked best, and what it was that made him laugh. When there was not enough of this element in the songs he was singing, the boy added to it himself, and this early gave him practice in adapting words to music. It was chiefly lampoons and odious things about people who had risen to power and prosperity, that the father liked and the boy sang.

The mother finally concluded to take him with her to the stable of evenings; numerous were the pretexts he found to escape going, but when, nevertheless, she managed to take him with her, she talked kindly to him about God and good things, usually ending by taking him in her arms, and, amid blinding tears, begging him, entreating him not to become a bad man.

The mother taught the boy to read, and he was surprisingly quick at learning. The father was proud of this, and, especially when he was drunk, told Arne he had his head.

Soon the father fell into the habit, when

drink got the better of him, of calling on Arne at dancing-parties to sing for the people. The boy always obeyed, singing song after song amid laughter and uproar; the applause pleased the son almost more than it did the father, and finally there was no end to the songs Arne could sing. Anxious mothers who heard this, went themselves to his mother and told her of it; their reason for so doing being that the character of these songs was not what it should be. The mother put her arms about her boy and forbade him, in the name of God and all that was sacred, to sing such songs, and now it seemed to Arne that everything he took delight in his mother opposed. For the first time he told his father what his mother had said. She had to suffer for this the next time the father was drunk; he held his peace until then. But no sooner had it become clear to the boy what he had done than in his soul he implored pardon of God and her; he could not bring himself to do so in spoken words. His mother was just as kind as ever to him, and this cut him to the quick.

Once, however, he forgot this. He had a faculty for mimicking people. Above all, he could talk and sing as others did. The mother came in one evening when Arne was entertain-

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ing his father with this, and it occurred to the father, after she had gone out, that the boy should imitate his mother's singing. Arne refused at first, but his father, who lay over on the bed and laughed until it shook, insisted finally that he should sing like his mother. She is gone, thought the boy, and cannot hear it, and he mimicked her singing as it sounded sometimes when she was hoarse and choked with tears. The father laughed until it seemed almost hideous to the boy, and he stopped of himself. Just then the mother came in from the kitchen ; she looked long and hard at the boy, as she crossed the floor to a shelf after a milk-pan and turned to carry it out.

A burning heat ran through his whole body ; she had heard it all. He sprang down from the table where he had been sitting, went out, cast himself on the ground, and it seemed as though he must bury himself out of sight. He could not rest, and got up feeling that he must go farther on. He went past the barn, and behind it sat the mother, sewing on a fine, new shirt, just for him. She had always been in the habit of singing a hymn over her work when she sat sewing, but now she was not singing. She was not weeping, either ; she only sat and sewed. Arne could bear it no longer

he flung himself down in the grass directly in front of her, looked up at her, and wept and sobbed bitterly. The mother dropped her work and took his head between her hands.

"Poor Arne!" said she, and laid her own beside his. He did not try to say a word, but wept as he had never done before. "I knew you were good at heart," said the mother, and stroked down his hair.

"Mother, you must not say no to what I am going to ask for," was the first thing he could say.

"That you know I cannot do," answered she.

He tried to stop crying, and then stammered out, with his head still in her lap: "Mother, sing something for me."

"My dear, I cannot," said she, softly.

"Mother, sing something for me," begged the boy, "or I believe I will never be able to look at you again."

She stroked his hair, but was silent.

"Mother, sing, sing, I say! Sing," he begged. "or I will go so far away that I will never come home any more."

And while he, now fourteen in his fifteenth year as he was, lay there with his head in his mother's lap, she began to sing over him: —

"Father, stretch forth Thy mighty hand,
Thy Holy Spirit send yonder:
Bless Thou the child on the lonely strand,
Nor in its sports let it wander.
Slipp'ry the way, the water deep,—
Lord, in Thy arm but the darling keep,
Then through Thy mercy 't will never
Drown, but with Thee live forever.

"Missing her child, in disquiet sore,
Much for its safety fearing,
Often the mother calls from her door,
Never an answer hearing, —
Then comes the thought: where'er it be,
Blessed Lord, it is near to Thee;
Jesus will guide his brother
Home to the anxious mother." [1]

She sang several verses. Arne lay still: there descended upon him a blessed peace, and under its influence he felt a refreshing weariness. The last thing he distinctly heard was about Jesus: it bore him into the midst of a great light, and there it seemed as though twelve or thirteen were singing; but the mother's voice rose above them all. A lovelier voice he had never heard; he prayed that he might sing thus. It seemed to him that if he were to sing right softly he might do so; and now he sang softly, tried again softly, and still more softly, and then, rejoiced at the bliss that seemed al most dawning for him, he joined in with full

[1] Auber Forestier's translation.

voice, and the spell was broken. He awakened, looked about him, listened, but heard nothing, save the everlasting, mighty roar of the force, and the little creek that flowed past the barn, with its low and incessant murmuring. The mother was gone, — she had laid under his head the half-finished shirt and her jacket.

CHAPTER IV.

When the time came to take the herds up into the woods, Arne wanted to tend them. His father objected; the boy had never tended cattle, and he was now in his fifteenth year. But he was so urgent that it was finally arranged as he wished; and the entire spring, summer, and autumn he was in the woods by himself the livelong day, only going home to sleep.

He took his books up there with him. He read and carved letters in the bark of the trees; he went about thinking, longing, and singing. When he came home in the evening his father was often drunk, and beat the mother, cursed her and the parish, and talked about how he might once have journeyed far away. Then the longing for travel entered the boy's mind too. There was no comfort at home, and the books opened other worlds to him; sometimes it seemed as though the air, too, wafted him far away over the lofty mountains

So it happened about midsummer that he

met Kristian, the captain's eldest son, who came with the servant boy to the woods after the horses, in order to get a ride home. He was a few years older than Arne, light-hearted and gay, unstable in all his thoughts, but nevertheless firm in his resolves. He spoke rapidly and in broken sentences, and usually about two things at once; rode horseback without a saddle, shot birds on the wing, went fly-fishing, and seemed to Arne the goal of his aspirations. He also had his head full of travel, and told Arne about foreign lands until everything about them was radiant. He discovered Arne's fondness for reading, and now carried up to him those books he had read himself. After Arne had finished reading these, Kristian brought him new ones; he sat there himself on Sundays, and taught Arne how to find his way in the geography and the map; and all summer and autumn Arne read until he grew pale and thin.

In the winter he was allowed to read at home; partly because he was to be confirmed the next year, partly because he always knew how to manage his father. He began to go to school; but there he took most comfort when he closed his eyes and fancied himself over his books at home; besides, there were no longer

any companions for him among the peasant boys.

His father's ill-treatment of the mother increased with years, as did also his fondness for drink and his bodily suffering. And when Arne, notwithstanding this, had to sit and amuse him, in order to furnish the mother with an hour's peace, and then often talk of things he now, in his heart, despised, he felt growing within him a hatred for his father. This he hid far down in his heart, as he did his love for his mother. When he was with Kristian, their talk ran on great journeys and books ; even to him he said nothing about how things were at home. But many times after these wide-ranging talks, when he was walking home alone, wondering what might now meet him there, he wept and prayed to God, in the starry heavens, to grant that he might soon be allowed to go away.

In the summer he and Kristian were confirmed. Directly afterward, the latter carried out his plan. His father had to let him go from home and become a sailor. He presented Arne with his books, promised to write often to him, — and went away.

Now Arne was alone.

About this time he was again filled with a

desire to write songs. He no longer patched up old ones; he made new ones, and wove into them all that grieved him most.

But his heart grew too heavy, and his sorrow broke forth in his songs. He now lay through long, sleepless nights, brooding, until he felt sure that he could bear this no longer, but must journey far away, seek Kristian, and not say a word about it to any one. He thought of his mother, and what would become of her, — and he could scarcely look her in the face.

He sat up late one evening reading. When his heart became too gloomy, he took refuge in his books, and did not perceive that they increased the venom. His father was at a wedding, but was expected home that evening; his mother was tired, and dreaded her husband's return; had therefore gone to bed. Arne started up at the sound of a heavy fall in the passage and the rattling of something hard, which struck against the door. It was his father who had come home.

Arne opened the door and looked at him.

"Is that you, my clever boy? Come and help your father up!"

He was raised up and helped in toward the bench. Arne took up the fiddle-case, carried it in, and closed the door.

"Yes, look at me, you clever boy. I am not handsome now; this is no longer tailor Nils. This I say — to you, that you — never shall drink brandy; it is — the world and the flesh and the devil — He resisteth the proud but giveth grace unto the humble. — Ah, woe, woe is me! — How far it has gone with me!"

He sat still a while, then he sang, weeping, —

"Merciful Lord, I come to Thee;
Help, if there can be help for me;
Though by the mire of sin defiled,
I 'm still thine own dear ransomed child." [1]

"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof; but speak the word only" — He flung himself down, hid his face in his hands, and sobbed convulsively. Long he lay thus, and then he repeated word for word from the Bible, as he had learned it probably more than twenty years before: "Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, Lord, help me! But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table!"

He was silent now, and dissolved in a flood of tears.

[1] Translated by Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.

The mother had awakened long since, but had not dared raise her eyes, now that her husband was weeping like one who is saved; she leaned on her elbows and looked up.

But scarcely had Nils descried her, than he shrieked out: "Are you staring at me; you, too? — you want to see, I suppose, what you have brought me to. Aye, this is the way I look, exactly so!" He rose up, and she hid herself under the robe. "No, do not hide, I will find you easily enough," said he, extending his right hand, and groping his way along with outstretched forefinger. "Tickle, tickle!" said he, as he drew off the covers and placed his finger on her throat.

"Father!" said Arne.

"Oh dear! how shriveled up and thin you have grown. There is not much flesh here. Tickle, tickle."

The mother convulsively seized his hand with both of hers, but could not free herself, and so rolled herself into a ball.

"Father!" said Arne.

"So life has come into you now. How she writhes, the fright! Tickle, tickle!"

"Father!" said Arne. The room seemed to swim about him.

"Tickle, I say!"

She let go his hands and gave up.

"Father!" shouted Arne. He sprang to the corner, where stood an axe.

"It is only from obstinacy that you do not scream. You had better not do so either; I have taken such a frightful fancy. Tickle, tickle!"

"Father!" shrieked Arne, seizing the axe, but remained standing as though nailed to the spot, for at that moment the father drew himself up, gave a piercing cry, clutched at his breast, and fell over. "Jesus Christ!" said he, and lay quite still.

Arne knew not where he stood or what he stood over; he waited, as it were, for the room to burst asunder, and for a strong light to break in somewhere. The mother began to draw her breath heavily, as though she were rolling off some great weight. She finally half rose, and saw the father lying stretched out on the floor, the son standing beside him with an axe.

"Merciful Lord, what have you done?" she shrieked, and started up out of bed, threw her skirt about her, and came nearer; then Arne felt as if his tongue were unloosed.

"He fell down himself," said he.

"Arne, Arne, I do not believe you," cried the mother, in a loud, rebuking tone. "Now

Jesus be with you!" and she flung herself over the corpse, with piteous lamentation.

Now the boy came out of his stupor, and dropping down on his knees, exclaimed, "As surely as I look for mercy from God, he fell as he stood there."

"Then our Lord himself has been here," said she, quietly; and, sitting on the floor, she fixed her eyes on the corpse.

Nils lay precisely as he fell, stiff, with open eyes and mouth. His hands had drawn near together, as though he had tried to clasp them, but had been unable to do so.

"Take hold of your father, you are so strong, and help me lay him on the bed."

And they took hold of him and laid him on the bed. Margit closed his eyes and mouth, stretched him out and folded his hands.

Mother and son stood and looked at him. All they had experienced until then neither seemed so long nor contained so much as this moment. If the devil himself had been there, the Lord had been there also; the encounter had been short. All the past was now settled.

It was a little after midnight, and they had to be there with the dead man until day dawned. Arne crossed the floor, and made a great fire on the hearth, the mother sat down

by it. And now, as she sat there, it rushed through her mind how many evil days she had had with Nils; and then she thanked God, in a loud, fervent prayer, for what He had done. "But I have truly had some good days also," said she, and wept as though she regretted her recent thankfulness; and it ended in her taking the greatest blame on herself who had acted contrary to God's commandment, out of love for the departed one, had been disobedient to her mother, and therefore had been punished through this sinful love.

Arne sat down directly opposite her. The mother's eyes were fixed on the bed.

"Arne, you must remember that it was for your sake I bore it all," and she wept, yearning for a loving word in order to gain a support against her own self-accusations, and comfort for all coming time. The boy trembled and could not answer. "You must never leave me," sobbed she.

Then it came suddenly to his mind what she had been, in all this time of sorrow, and how boundless would be her desolation should he, as a reward for her great fidelity, forsake her now.

"Never, never!" he whispered, longing to go to her, yet unable to do so.

They kept their seats, but their tears flowed freely together. She prayed aloud, now for the dead man, now for herself and her boy; and thus, amid prayers and tears, the time passed. Finally she said: —

"Arne, you have such a fine voice, you must sit over by the bed and sing for your father."

And it seemed as though strength was forthwith given him to do so. He got up, and went to fetch a hymn-book, then lit a torch, and with the torch in one hand, the hymn-book in the other, he sat down at the head of the bed and, in a clear voice, sang Kingo's one hundred and twenty-seventh hymn: —

"Turn from us, gracious Lord, thy dire displeasure!
Let not thy bloody rod, beyond all measure,
Chasten thy children, laden with sore oppressions,
For our transgressions." [1]

[1] Auber Forestier's translation.

CHAPTER V.

ARNE became habitually silent and shy. He tended cattle and made songs. He passed his nineteenth birthday, and still he kept on tending cattle. He borrowed books from the priest and read; but he took interest in nothing else.

The priest sent word to him one day that he had better become a school-master, "because the parish ought to derive benefit from your talents and knowledge." Arne made no reply to this; but the next day, while driving the sheep before him, he made the following song: —

"Oh, my pet lamb, lift your head,
Though the stoniest path you tread,
Over the mountains lonely,
Still your bells follow only.

"Oh, my pet lamb, walk with care,
Lest you spoil all your wool beware,
Mother must soon be sewing
Skins for the summer 's going.

"Oh, my pet lamb, try to grow
Fat and fine wheresoe'er you go!
Know you not, little sweeting,
A spring lamb is dainty eating!"

[1] Adapted to the metre of the original from the translation of Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.

One day in his twentieth year Arne chanced to overhear a conversation between his mother and the wife of the former gard owner; they were disputing about the horse they owned in common.

"I must wait to hear what Arne says," remarked the mother.

"That lazy fellow!" was the reply. "He would like, I dare say, to have the horse go ranging about the woods as he does himself."

The mother was now silent, although before she had been arguing her own case well.

Arne turned as red as fire. It had not occurred to him before that his mother might have to listen to taunting words for his sake, and yet perhaps she had often been obliged to do so. Why had she not told him of this?

He considered the matter well, and now it struck him that his mother scarcely ever talked with him. But neither did he talk with her. With whom did he talk, after all?

Often on Sunday, when he sat quietly at home, he felt a desire to read sermons to his mother, whose eyes were poor; she had wept too much in her day. But he did not have the courage to do so. Many times he had wanted to offer to read aloud to her from his own books, when all was still in the house, and he

thought the time must hang heavily on her hands. But his courage failed him for this too.

"It cannot matter much. I must give up tending the herds, and move down to mother."

He let several days pass, and became firm in his resolve. Then he drove the cattle far around in the wood, and made the following song: —

"The vale is full of trouble, but here sweet Peace may reign;
Within this quiet forest no bailiffs may distrain;
None fight, as in the vale, in the Blessed Church's name,
Yet if a church were here, it would no doubt be just the same.

"How peaceful is the forest: — true, the hawk is far from kind,
I fear he now is striving the plumpest sparrow to find;
I fear yon eagle 's coming to rob the kid of breath,
And yet perchance if long it lived, it might be tired to death.

"The woodman fells one tree, and another rots away,
The red fox killed the lambkin white at sunset yesterday;
The wolf, though, killed the fox, and the wolf itself must die,
For Arne shot him down to-day before the dew was dry.

"I'll hie me to the valley back — the forest is as bad;
And I must see to take good heed, lest thinking drive me mad.
I saw a boy in my dreams, though where I cannot tell —
But I know he had killed his father — I think it was in Hell." [1]

He came home and told his mother that she might send out in the parish after another herd-boy; he wanted to manage the gard himself. Thus it was arranged; but the mother

[1] Adapted to the metre of the original, from the translation o Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.

was always after him with warnings not to overtax himself with work. She used also to prepare such good meals for him at this time that he often felt ashamed; but he said nothing.

He was working at a song, the refrain of which was "Over the lofty mountains." He never succeeded in finishing it, and this was chiefly because he wanted to have the refrain in every other line; finally he gave it up.

But many of the songs he made got out among the people, where they were well liked; there were those who wished very much to talk with him, especially as they had known him from boyhood up. But Arne was shy of all whom he did not know, and thought ill of them, chiefly because he believed they thought ill of him.

His constant companion in the fields was a middle-aged man, called Upland Knut, who had a habit of singing over his work; but he always sang the same song. After listening to this for a few months, Arne was moved to ask him if he did not know any others.

"No," was the man's reply.

Then after the lapse of several days, once when Knut was singing his song, Arne asked:

"How did you chance to learn this *one?*"

"Oh, it just happened so," said the man.

Arne went straight from him into the house; but there sat his mother weeping, a sight he had not seen since his father's death. He pretended not to notice her, and went toward the door again; but he felt his mother looking sorrowfully after him again and he had to stop.

"What are you crying for, mother?"

For a while his words were the only sound in the room, and therefore they came back to him again and again, so often that he felt they had not been said gently enough. He asked once more: —

"What are you crying for?"

"Oh, I am sure I do not know;" but now she wept harder than ever.

He waited a long time, then was forced to say, as courageously as he could: —

"There must be something you are crying about!"

Again there was silence. He felt very guilty, although *she* had said nothing, and *he* knew nothing.

"It just happened so," said the mother. Presently she added, "I am after all most fortunate," and then she wept.

But Arne hastened out, and he felt drawn toward the Kamp gorge. He sat down to look

into it, and while he was sitting there, he too wept. "If I only knew what I was crying for," mused Arne.

Above him, in the new-plowed field, Upland Knut was singing his song: —

"Ingerid Sletten of Willow-pool
Had no costly trinkets to wear;
But a cap she had that was far more fair,
Although it was only of wool.

"It had no trimming, and now was old,
But her mother who long had gone
Had given it her, and so it shone
To Ingerid more than gold.

"For twenty years she laid it aside,
That it might not be worn away;
'My cap I 'll wear on that blissful day
When I shall become a bride.'

"For thirty years she laid it aside
Lest the colors might fade away.
'My cap I 'll wear when to God I pray
A happy and grateful bride.'

"For forty years she laid it aside,
Still holding her mother as dear;
'My little cap, I certainly fear
I never shall be a bride.'

"She went to look for the cap one day
In the chest where it long had lain;
But ah! her looking was all in vain,—
The cap had moldered away." [1]

Arne sat and listened as though the words had been music far away up the slope. He went up to Knut.

[1] Translated by Augusta Plesner and S. Rugelev-Powers.

"Have you a mother?" asked he.

"No."

"Have you a father?"

"Oh, no; I have no father."

"Is it long since they died?"

"Oh, yes; it is long since."

"You have not many, I dare say, who care for you?"

"Oh, no; not many."

"Have you any one here?"

"No, not here."

"But yonder in your native parish?"

"Oh, no; not there either."

"Have you not any one at all who cares for you?"

"Oh, no; I have not."

But Arne went from him loving his own mother so intensely that it seemed as though his heart would break; and he felt, as it were, a blissful light over him. "Thou Heavenly Father," thought he, "Thou hast given her to me, and such unspeakable love with the gift, and I put this away from me; and one day when I want it, she will be perhaps no more!" He felt a desire to go to her, if for nothing else only to look at her. But on the way, it suddenly occurred to him: "Perhaps because you did not appreciate her you may soon have

to endure the grief of losing her!" He stood still at once. "Almighty God! what then would become of me?"

He felt as though some calamity must be happening at home. He hastened toward the house; cold sweat stood on his brow; his feet scarcely touched the ground. He tore open the passage door, but within the whole atmosphere was at once filled with peace. He softly opened the door into the family-room. The mother had gone to bed, the moon shone full in in her face, and she lay sleeping calmly as a child.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME days after this, mother and son, who of late had been more together, agreed to be present at the wedding of some relatives at a neighboring gard. The mother had not been to any party since she was a girl.

They knew few people at the wedding, save by name, and Arne thought it especially strange that everybody stared at him wherever he went.

Once some words were spoken behind him in the passage; he was not sure, but he fancied he understood them, and every drop of blood rushed into his face whenever he thought of them.

He could not keep his eyes off the man who had spoken these words; finally, he took a seat beside him. But as he drew up to the table he thought the conversation took another turn.

"Well, now I am going to tell you a story, which proves that nothing can be buried so deep down in night that it will not find its way into daylight," said the man, and Arne was sure he looked at *him*. He was an ill-favored

man, with thin, red hair encircling a great, round brow. Beneath were a pair of very small eyes and a little bottle-shaped nose; but the mouth was very large, with very pale, out-turned lips. When he laughed, he showed his gums. His hands lay on the table: they were clumsy and coarse, but the wrists were slender. He looked sharp and talked fast, but with much effort. People nicknamed him the Rattle-tongue, and Arne knew that tailor Nils had dealt roughly with him in the old days.

"Yes, there is a great deal of wickedness in this world; it comes nearer home to us than we think. But no matter; you shall hear now of an ugly deed. Those who are old remember Alf, Scrip Alf. 'Sure to come back!' said Alf; that saying comes from him; for when he had struck a bargain — and he could trade, that fellow! — he flung his scrip on his back. 'Sure to come back,' said Alf. A devilish good fellow, fine fellow, splendid fellow, this Alf, Scrip Alf!

"Well, there was Alf and Big Lazy-bones — aye, you knew Big Lazy-bones? — he was big and he was lazy too. He looked too long at a shining black horse Scrip Alf drove and had trained to spring like a summer frog. And before Big Lazy-bones knew what he was

about, he had given fifty dollars for the nag Big Lazy-bones mounted a carriole,[1] as large as life, to drive like a king with his fifty-dollar horse; but now he might lash and swear until the gard was all in a smoke; the horse ran, for all that, against all the doors and walls that were in the way; he was stone blind.

"Afterwards, Alf and Big Lazy-bones fell to quarreling about this horse all through the parish, just like a couple of dogs. Big Lazy-bones wanted his money back; but you may believe he never got so much as two Danish shillings. Scrip Alf thrashed him until the hair flew. 'Sure to come back,' said Alf. Devilish good fellow, fine fellow, splendid fellow, this Alf — Scrip Alf.

"Well, then, some years passed by without his being heard of again.

"It might have been ten years later that he was published on the church hill;[2] there had been left to him a tremendous fortune. Big Lazy-bones was standing by. 'I knew very well,' said he, 'that it was money that was crying for Scrip Alf, and not people.'

"Now there was a great deal of gossip about Alf; and out of it all was gathered that he had

[1] A kind of road-sulky used by travelers in Norway.

[2] Important announcements are made to the people in front of the church after service.

been seen last on this side of Rören, and not on the other. Yes, you remember the Rören road — the old road?

But Big Lazy-bones had succeeded in rising to great power and splendor, owning both farm and complete outfit.

Moreover, he had professed great piety, and everybody knew he did not become pious for nothing — any more than other folks do. People began to talk about it.

It was at this time that the Rören road was to be changed, old-time folks wanted to go straight ahead, and so it went directly over Rören; but we like things level, and so the road now runs down by the river. There was a mining and a blasting, until one might have expected Rören to come tumbling down. All sorts of officials came there, but the amtmand [1] oftenest of all, for he was allowed double mileage. And now, one day while they were digging down among the rocks, some one went to pick up a stone, but got hold of a hand that was sticking out of the rocks, and so strong was this hand that it sent the man who took hold of it reeling backwards. Now he who found this hand was Big Lazy-bones. The lensmand [2]

[1] The chief magistrate of an amt or county.

[2] Bailiff.

was sauntering about there, he was called, and the skeleton of a whole man was dug out. The doctor was sent for too; he put the bones so skillfully together that now only the flesh was wanting. But people claimed that this skeleton was precisely the same size as Scrip Alf. 'Sure to come back!' said Alf.

"Every one thought it most strange that a dead hand could upset a fellow like Big Lazy-bones, even when it did not strike at all. The lensmand talked seriously to him about it, — of course when no one was by to hear. But then Big Lazy-bones swore until everything grew black about the lensmand.

"'Well, well,' said the lensmand, 'if you had nothing to do with this, you are just the fellow to go to bed with the skeleton to-night; hey?' 'To be sure I am,' replied Big Lazy-bones. And now the doctor jointed the bones firmly together, and placed the skeleton in one of the beds of the barracks. In the other Big Lazy-bones was to sleep, but the lensmand laid down in his gown, close up to the wall. When it grew dark and Big Lazy-bones had to go in to his bed-fellow, it just seemed as though the door shut of itself, and he stood in the dark. But Big Lazy-bones fell to singing hymns, for he had a strong voice. 'Why are you singing

hymns?' asked the lensmand, outside of the wall. 'No one knows whether he has had the chorister,' answered Big Lazy-bones. Afterward he fell to praying with all his might. 'Why are you praying?' asked the lensmand, outside of the wall. 'He has no doubt been a great sinner,' answered Big Lazy-bones. Then for a long time all was still, and it really seemed as though the lensmand must be sleeping. Then there was a shriek that made the barracks shake. 'Sure to come back!' An infernal noise and uproar arose: 'Hand over those fifty dollars of mine!' bellowed Big Lazy-bones, and there followed a screaming and a wrestling; the lensmand flung open the door, people rushed in with sticks and stones, and there lay Big Lazy-bones in the middle of the floor, and on him was the skeleton."

It was very still around the table. Finally a man who was about to light his clay pipe, said: —

"He surely went mad after that day."

"He did."

Arne felt every one looking at him, and therefore he could not raise his eyes.

"It is, as I have said," put in the first speaker; "nothing can be buried so deep

down in night that it will not find its way into daylight!"

"Well, now I will tell about a son who beat his own father," said a fair, heavily-built man, with a round face. Arne knew not where he was sitting.

"It was a bully of a powerful race, over in Hardanger; he was the ruin of many people. His father and he disagreed about the yearly allowance, and the result of this was that the man had no peace at home or in the parish.

"Owing to this he grew more and more wicked, and his father took him to task. 'I will take rebuke from no one,' said the son. 'From me you shall take it as long as I live,' said the father. 'If you do not hold your tongue I will beat you,' said the son, and sprang to his feet. 'Aye, do so if you dare, and you will never prosper in the world,' answered the father, as he too rose. 'Do you think so?'—and the son rushed at him and knocked him down. But the father did not resist; he crossed his arms and let his son do as he chose with him.

"The son beat him, seized hold of him and dragged him to the door. 'I will have peace in the house!' But when they came to the door, the father raised himself up. 'Not far-

ther than to the door,' said he, 'for so far I dragged my own father.' The son paid no heed to this, but dragged his head across the threshold. 'Not farther than to the door, I say!' Here the old man flung his son down at his feet, and chastised him, just as though he were a child."

"That was badly done," said several.

"Did not strike his father, though," Arne thought some one said; but he was not sure of it.

"Now I shall tell *you* something," said Arne, rising up, as pale as death, not knowing what he was going to say. He only saw the words floating about him like great snow-flakes. "I will make a grasp at them hap-hazard!" and he began.

"A troll met a boy who was walking along a road crying. 'Of whom are you most afraid?' said the troll, 'of yourself, or of others?' But the boy was crying, because he had dreamed in the night that he had been forced to kill his wicked father, and so he answered, 'I am most afraid of myself.' 'Then be at peace with yourself, and never cry any more; for hereafter you shall only be at war with others.' And the troll went his way. But the first person the boy met laughed at him,

and so the boy had to laugh back again. The next person he met struck him; the boy had to defend himself, and struck back. The third person he met tried to kill him, and so the boy had to take his life. Then everybody said hard things about him, and therefore he knew only hard things to say of everybody. They locked their cupboards and doors against him, so he had to steal his way to what he needed; he even had to steal his night's rest. Since they would not let him do anything good, he had to do something bad. Then the parish said, 'We must get rid of this boy; he is so bad; and one fine day they put him out of the way. But the boy had not the least idea that he had done anything wicked, and so after death he came strolling right into the presence of the Lord. There on a bench sat the father he had not slain, and right opposite, on another bench, sat all those who had forced him to do wrong.

"'Which bench are you afraid of?' asked the Lord, and the boy pointed to the long one.

"'Sit down there, beside your father,' said the Lord, and the boy turned to do so.

"Then the father fell from the bench, with a great gash in his neck. In his place there came one in the likeness of the boy, with re-

pentant countenance and ghastly features; then another with drunken face and drooping form; still another with the face of a madman, with tattered clothes and with hideous laughter.

" ' Thus it might have been with you,' said the Lord.

" ' Can that really be?' replied the boy, touching the hem of the Lord's garment.

" Then both benches fell down from heaven, and the boy stood beside the Lord again and laughed.

" ' Remember this when you awaken,' said the Lord, and at that moment the boy awoke.

" Now the boy who dreamed thus is I, and they who tempted him by thinking him wicked are you. I no longer fear myself, but I am afraid of you. Do not stir up my evil passions, for it is doubtful whether I may get hold of the Lord's garment.

He rushed out, and the men looked at each other.

CHAPTER VII.

It was the next day, in the barn of the same gard. Arne had been drunk for the first time in his life, was ill in consequence of it, and had been lying in the barn almost twenty-four hours. Now, turning over, he had propped himself up on his elbows, and thus talked with himself: —

"Everything I look at becomes cowardice. That I did not run away when I was a boy, was cowardice; that I listened to father rather than to mother, was cowardice; that I sang those wicked songs for him was cowardice; I became a herd-boy, that was from cowardice; — I took to reading — oh, yes! that was from cowardice, too; I wanted to hide away from myself. Even after I was grown up, I did not help mother against father — cowardice; that I did not that night — ugh! — cowardice! I should most likely have waited until *she* was killed. I could not stand it at home after that — cowardice; neither did I go my way — cowardice; I did nothing, I tended cattle — cow-

ardice. To be sure, I had promised mother to stay with her; but I should actually have been cowardly enough to break the promise, had I not been afraid to mingle with people. For I am afraid of people chiefly because I believe they see how bad I am. And it is fear of people makes me speak ill of them — cursed cowardice! I make rhymes from cowardice. I dare not think in a straightforward manner about my own affairs, and so I turn to those of others — and that is to be a poet.

"I should have sat down and cried until the hills were turned into water, that is what I should have done; but instead I say: 'Hush, hush!' and set myself to rocking. And even my songs are cowardly; for were they courageous they would be better. I am afraid of strong thoughts; afraid of everything that is strong; if I do rise up to strength, it is in a frenzy, and frenzy is cowardice. I am more clever, more capable, better informed than I seem to be. I am better than my words; but through cowardice I dare not be what I am. Fy! I drank brandy from cowardice; I wanted to deaden the pain! Fy! it hurt. I drank, nevertheless; drank, nevertheless; drank my father's heart's blood, and yet I drank! The fact is, my cowardice is beyond all bounds;

but the most cowardly thing of all is that I can sit here and say all this to myself.

"Kill myself? Pooh! For that I am too cowardly. And then I believe in God, — yes, I believe in God. I long to go to Him; but cowardice keeps me from Him. From so great a change a cowardly person winces. But what if I tried as well as I am able? Almighty God! What if I tried? I might find a cure that even my milksop nature could bear; for I have no bone in me any longer, nor gristle; only something fluid, slush. . . . . What if I tried, with good, mild books, — I am afraid of the strong ones, — with pleasant stories and legends, all such as are mild; and then a sermon every Sunday and a prayer every evening, and regular work, that religion may find fruitful soil; it cannot do so amid slothfulness. What if I tried, dear, gentle God of my childhood, — what if I tried?"

But some one opened the barn-door, and hurried across the floor, pale as death, although drops of sweat rolled down the face. It was Arne's mother. It was the second day she had been seeking for her son. She called his name but did not pause to listen; only called and rushed about, till he answered from the haymow, where he was lying. She gave a loud

shriek, sprang to the mow more lightly than a boy, and threw herself upon him.

"Arne, Arne, are you here? So I have really found you. I have been looking for you since yesterday; I have searched the whole night! Poor, poor Arne! I saw they had wounded you. I wanted so much to talk with you and comfort you; but then I never dare talk with you! Arne, I saw you drink! O God Almighty! let me never see it again!"

It was long before she could say more. "Jesus have mercy on you, my child; I saw you drink! Suddenly you were gone, drunk and crushed with grief as you were, and I ran around to all the houses. I went far out in the field; I did not find you. I searched in every copse; I asked every one. I was *here*, too, but you did not answer me — Arne, Arne! I walked along the river; but it did not seem to be deep enough anywhere" — She pressed up close to him. "Then it came with such relief to my mind that you might have gone home, and I am sure I was not more than a quarter of an hour getting over the road. I opened the door and looked in every room, and then first remembered that I myself had the key; you could not possibly have entered. Arne, last night I searched along the road on both sides;

I dared not go to the Kamp gorge. I know not how I came here; no one helped me; but the Lord put it into my heart that you must be here!"

He tried to soothe her.

"Arne, indeed, you must never drink brandy again."

"No, you may be sure of that."

"They must have been very rough with you. Were they rough with you?"

"Oh, no; it was I who was *cowardly*." He laid stress on the word.

"I cannot exactly understand why they should be rough with you. What was it they did to you? You will never tell me anything," and she began to weep again.

"You never tell me anything, either," said Arne, gently.

"But you are most to blame, Arne. I got so into the habit of being silent in your father's day that you ought to have helped me a little on the way! My God! there are only two of us, and we have suffered so much together!"

"Let us see if we cannot do better," whispered Arne. "Next Sunday I will read the sermon to you."

"God bless you for that! Arne?"

"Yes?"

"I have something I ought to say to you."

"Say it, mother."

"I have sinned greatly against you; I have done something wrong."

"You, mother?" And it touched him so deeply that his own good, infinitely patient mother should accuse herself of having sinned against him, who had never been really good to her, that he put his arm round her, patted her, and burst into tears.

"Yes, I have; and yet I could not help it."

"Oh, you have never wronged me in any way."

"Yes, I have, — God knows it; it was only because I was so fond of you. But you must forgive me; do you hear?"

"Yes, I will forgive you."

"Well, then, I will tell you about it another time; but you will forgive me?"

"Oh, yes, mother!"

"You see, it is perhaps because of this that it has been so hard to talk with you; I have sinned against you."

"I beg of you not to talk so, mother."

"I am happy now, having been able to say so much."

"We must talk more together, we two, mother."

"Yes, that we must; and then you will really read the sermon for me?"

"Yes, I will do so."

"Poor Arne! God bless you!"

"I think it is best for us to go home."

"Yes, we will go home."

"Why are you looking round so, mother?"

"Your father lay in this barn, and wept."

"Father?" said Arne, and grew very pale.

"Poor Nils! It was the day you were christened. Why are you looking round, Arne?"

CHAPTER VIII.

FROM the day that Arne tried with his whole heart to live closer to his mother his relations with other people were entirely changed. He looked on them more with the mother's mild eyes. But he often found it hard to keep true to his resolve ; for what he thought most deeply about his mother did not always understand. Here is a song from those days : —

" It was such a pleasant, sunny day,
In-doors I could not think of staying:
I strolled to the wood, on my back I lay,
And rocked what my mind was saying;
But there crawled emmets, and gnats stung there,
The wasps and the clegs brought dire despair.

" ' My dear, will you not go out in this pleasant weather ? ' said mother. She sat singing on the porch.

" It was such a pleasant, sunny day,
In-doors I could not think of staying:
I strayed to a field, on my back I lay,
And sang what my mind was saying;
But snakes came out to enjoy the sun,
Three ells were they long, and away I run.

" ' In such pleasant weather we can go bare-

foot,' said mother, and she pulled off her stockings.

"It was such a pleasant, sunny day,
In-doors I could no longer tarry:
I stepped in a boat, on my back I lay,
The tide did me onward carry;
The sun, though, scorched till my nose was burned;
There 's limit to all, so to shore I turned.

"'What fine days these are for drying the hay!' said mother, as she shook it with a rake.

"It was such a pleasant, sunny day,
In-doors I could not think of staying:
I climbed up a tree, and thought there I 'd stay,
For there were cool breezes playing.
A grub to fall on my neck then there chanced;
I sprang down and screamed, and how madly I danced.

"'Well, if the cow does not thrive such a day as this, she never will,' said mother, as she gazed up the slope.

"It was such a pleasant, sunny day,
In-doors I could no peace discover:
I made for the force that did loudly play,
For *there* it must surely hover;
But there I drowned while the sun still shone.
If you made this song, it is surely not my own.[1]

"'It would take only about three such sunny days to get everything under cover,' said mother; and off she started to make my bed."

Nevertheless, this companionship with his

[1] Auber Forestier's translation.

mother brought every day more and more comfort to Arne. What she did not understand formed quite as much of a tie between them as what she did understand. For the fact of her not comprehending a thing made him think it over oftener, and she grew only the dearer to him because he found her limits on every side. Yes, she became infinitely dear to him.

As a child, Arne had not cared much for nursery stories. Now, as a grown person, he longed for them, and they led to traditions and ancient ballads. His mind was filled with a wonderful yearning; he walked much alone, and many of the places round about, which formerly he had not noticed, seemed strangely beautiful. In the days when he had gone with those of his own age to the priest's to prepare for confirmation, he had often played with them by a large lake below the parsonage, called Black Water, because it was deep and black. He began to think of this lake now, and one evening he wended his way thither.

He sat down behind a copse, just at the foot of the parsonage. This lay on the side of a very steep hill, which towered up beyond until it became a high mountain; the opposite bank was similar, and therefore huge shadows were cast over the lake from both sides, but in its

centre was a stripe of beautiful silvery water. All was at rest; the sun was just setting; a faint sound of tinkling bells floated over from the opposite shore; otherwise profound silence reigned. Arne did not look right across the lake, but first turned his eyes toward its lower end, for there the sun was shedding a sprinkling of burning red, ere it departed. Down there the mountains had parted to make room between them for a long, low valley, and against this the waves dashed; and it seemed as though the mountains had gradually sloped together to form a swing in which to rock this valley, which was dotted with its many gards. The curling smoke rose upward, and passed from sight; the fields were green and reeking; boats laden with hay were approaching the landings. Arne saw many people passing to and fro, but could hear no noise. Thence the eye wandered beyond the shore, where God's dark forest alone loomed up. Through the forest and along the lake men had drawn a road, as it were, with a finger, for a winding streak of dust plainly marked its course. This Arne's eye followed until it came directly opposite to where he was sitting; there the forest ended; the mountains made a little more room, and straightways gard after gard lay spread about. The houses were

still larger than those at the lower end, were painted red, and had higher windows, which now were in a blaze of light. The hills sparkled in dazzling sunshine ; the smallest child playing about could be plainly seen ; glittering white sand lay dry on the shore, and upon this little children bounded with their dogs. But suddenly the whole scene became desolate and gloomy; the houses dark red, the meadows dingy green, the sand grayish-white, and the children small clumps: a mass of mist had risen above the mountains, and had shut out the sun. Arne kept his eye fixed on the lake ; there he found everything again. The fields were rocking there, and the forest silently joined them ; the houses stood looking down, doors open, and children going out and in. Nursery tales and childish things came thronging into his mind, as little fish come after a bait, swim away, come back again, but do not nibble.

"Let us sit down here until your mother comes ; the priest's lady will surely get through some time."

Arne was startled ; some one had sat down just behind him.

"But I might be allowed to stay just this one night," said a beseeching voice, choked with

tears ; it seemed to be that of a young girl, not quite grown up.

" Do not cry any more ; it is shocking to cry because you must go home to your mother." This last came in a mild voice that spoke slowly and belonged to a man.

" That is not the reason I am crying."

" Why are you crying, then ? "

" Because I shall no longer be with Mathilde."

This was the name of the priest's only daughter, and reminded Arne that a peasant girl had been brought up with her.

" That could not last forever, any way."

" Yes, but just one day longer, dear ! " and she sobbed violently.

" It is best you should go home at once ; perhaps it is already too late."

" Too late? Why so? Who ever heard of such a thing ? "

" You are peasant-born, and a peasant you shall remain ; we cannot afford to keep a fine lady."

" I should still be a peasant, even if I remained here."

" You are no judge of that."

" I have always worn peasant's clothes."

" It is not that which makes the difference.'

"I have been spinning and weaving and cooking."

"It is not *that*, either."

"I can talk just as you and mother do."

"Not that, either."

"Then I do not know what it can be," said the girl, and laughed.

"Time will show. Besides, I am afraid you already have too many ideas."

"Ideas, ideas! You are always saying that. I have no ideas." She wept again.

"Oh, you are a weathercock, — that you are!"

"The priest never said so."

"No, but now *I* say so."

"A weathercock? Who ever heard of such a thing? I will not be a weathercock."

"Come, then, what will you be?"

"What will I be? Did you ever hear the like? I will be nothing."

"Very good, then; be nothing."

Now the girl laughed. Presently she said, gravely, "It is unkind of you to say I am nothing."

"Dear me, when that was what you wanted to be yourself!"

"No, I do not want to be nothing."

"Very good, then; be everything."

The girl laughed. Presently, with a sorrowful voice, "The priest never fooled with me in this way."

"No, he only made a fool of you."

"The priest? You have never been so kind to me as the priest has."

"No, for that would have spoiled you."

"Sour milk can never become sweet."

"Oh, yes, when it is boiled to whey."

Here the girl burst out laughing.

"There comes your mother."

Then she grew sober again.

"Such a long-winded woman as the priest's lady I have never met in all the days of my life," here interposed a shrill, rattling voice. "Make haste, now, Baard. Get up and push the boat out. We will not get home to-night. The lady wished me to see that Eli kept her feet dry. Dear me, you will have to see to that yourself. Every morning she must take a walk, for the sake of her health. It is health, health, from morning till night. Get up, now, Baard, and push out the boat. Just think, I have to set sponge this evening!"

"The chest has not come yet," said he, and lay still.

"But the chest is not to come, either; it is

to remain until the first Sunday there is service. Do you hear, Eli? Pick yourself up; take your bundle, and come. Get up, now, Baard!"

She led the way, and the girl followed.

"Come, now, I say, — come now!" resounded from below.

"Have you looked after the plug in the boat?" asked Baard, still without rising.

"Yes, it is there;" and Arne heard her just then hammering it in with the scoop. "But get up, I say, Baard! Surely we are not to stay here all night?"

"I am waiting for the chest."

"But, my dear, bless you, I have told you it is to wait until the first Sunday there is service."

"There it comes," said Baard, and they heard the rattling of a cart.

"Why, I said it was to wait until the first Sunday there is service."

"I said we were to take it along."

Without anything further, the wife hastened up to the cart, and carried the bundle, the lunch-box, and other small things down to the boat. Then Baard arose, went up, and took the chest himself.

But behind the cart there came rushing along

a girl in a straw hat, with floating hair; it was the priest's daughter.

"Eli! Eli!" she called, as she ran.

"Mathilde! Mathilde!" Eli answered, and ran toward her.

They met on the hill, put their arms about each other, and wept. Then Mathilde took up something she had set down on the grass: it was a bird-cage.

"You shall have Narrifas; yes, you shall. Mother wishes it, too. You shall, after all, have Narrifas, — indeed, you shall; and then you will think of me. And very often row — row — row over to me," and the tears of both flowed freely.

"Eli! Come, now, Eli! Do not stand there!" was heard from below.

"But I want to go along," said Mathilde. "I want to go and sleep with you to-night!"

"Yes, yes, yes!" and with arms twined about each other's necks they moved down toward the landing.

Presently Arne saw the boat out on the water. Eli stood high on the stern, with the bird-cage, and waved her hand; Mathilde was left behind, and sat on the stone landing weeping.

She remained sitting there as long as the

boat was on the water; it was but a short distance across to the red house, as said before; and Arne kept his seat, too. He watched the boat, as she did. It soon passed into the darkness, and he waited until it drew up to the shore: then he saw Eli and her parents in the water; in it he followed them up toward the houses, until they came to the prettiest one of them all. He saw the mother go in first, then the father with the chest, and last of all the daughter, so far as he could judge from their size. Soon after the daughter came out again, and sat down in front of the store-house door, probably that she might gaze over at the other side, where at that moment the sun was shedding its parting rays. But the young lady from the parsonage had already gone, and Arne alone sat watching Eli in the water.

"I wonder if she sees me!"

He got up and moved away. The sun had set, but the sky was bright and clear blue, as it often is of a summer night. Mist from land and water rose and floated over the mountains on both sides; but the peaks held themselves above it, and stood peering at one another. He went higher up. The lake grew blacker and deeper, and seemed, as it were, to contract. The upper valley shortened, and drew closer to

the lake. The mountains were nearer to the eye but looked more like a shapeless mass, for the light of the sun defines. The sky itself appeared nearer, and all surrounding objects became friendly and familiar.

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE and woman were beginning to play a prominent part in his thoughts; in the ancient ballads and stories of the olden times such themes were reflected as in a magic mirror, just as the girl had been in the lake. He constantly brooded over them, and after that evening he found pleasure in singing about them; for they seemed, as it were, to have come nearer home to him. But the thought glided away, and floated back again with a song that was unknown to him; he felt as though another had made it for him,—

"Fair Venevill bounded on lithesome feet
Her lover to meet.
He sang till it sounded afar away,
'Good-day, good-day,'
While blithesome birds were singing on every blooming spray
'On Midsummer Day
There is dancing and play;
But now I know not whether she weaves her wreath or nay.

"She wove him a wreath of corn-flowers blue:
'Mine eyes so true.'
He took it, but soon away it was flung:
'Farewell!' he sung;
And still with merry singing across the fields he sprung
'On Midsummer Day,' etc.

"She wove him a chain. 'Oh, keep it with care!
'T is made of my hair.'
She yielded him then, in an hour of bliss,
Her pure first kiss;
But he blushed as deeply as she the while her lips met his.
'On Midsummer Day,' etc.

"She wove him a wreath with a lily-band:
'My true right hand.'
She wove him another with roses aglow:
'My left hand, now.'
He took them gently from her, but blushes dyed his brow
'On Midsummer Day,' etc.

"She wove him a wreath of all flowers round:
'All I have found.'
She wept, but she gathered and wove on still:
'Take all you will.'
Without a word he took it, and fled across the hill.
'On Midsummer Day,' etc.

"She wove on, bewildered and out of breath:
'My bridal wreath.'
She wove till her fingers aweary had grown:
'Now put it on.'
But when she turned to see him, she found that he had gone.
'On Midsummer Day,' etc.

She wove on in haste, as for life and death,
Her bridal wreath;
But the Midsummer sun no longer shone,
And the flowers were gone;
But though she had no flowers, wild fancy still wove on.
'On Midsummer-Day
There is dancing and play;
But now I know not whether she weaves her wreath or nay."

[1] Translated by Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.

It was his own intense melancholy that called forth the first image of love that glided so gloomily through his soul. A twofold longing, — to have some one to love and to become something great, — blended together and became one. At this time he was working again at the song, "Over the lofty mountains," altering it, and all the while singing and thinking quietly to himself, "Surely I will get 'over' some day; I will sing until I gain courage." He did not forget his mother in these his thoughts of roving; indeed, he took comfort in the thought that as soon as he got firm foothold in the strange land, he would come back after her, and offer her conditions which he never could be able to provide for her at home. But in the midst of all these mighty yearnings there played something calm, cheering, refined, that darted away and came again, took hold and fled, and, dreamer that he had become, he was more in the power of these spontaneous thoughts than he himself was aware.

There lived in the parish a jovial man whose name was Ejnar Aasen. When he was twenty years old he had broken his leg; since then he had walked with a cane; but wherever he came hobbling along, there was always mirth

afoot. The man was rich. On his property there was a large nut-wood, and there was sure to be assembled, on one of the brightest, pleasantest days in autumn, a group of merry girls gathering nuts. At these nutting-parties he had plenty of feasting for his guests all day, and dancing in the evening. For most of these girls he had been godfather; indeed, he was the godfather of half the parish; all the children called him godfather, and from them every one else, both old and young, learned to do so.

Godfather and Arne were well acquainted, and he liked the young man because of the verses he made. Now godfather asked Arne to come to the nutting-party. Arne blushed and declined; he was not used to being with girls, he said.

"Then you must get used to it," replied godfather.

Arne could not sleep at night because of this; fear and yearning were at war within him; but whatever the result might be, he went along, and was about the only youth among all these girls. He could not deny that he felt disappointed; they were neither those he had sung about, nor those he had feared to meet. There was an excitement and mer-

riment, the like of which he had never known before, and the first thing that struck him was that they could laugh over nothing in the world; and if three laughed, why, then, five laughed, simply because those three laughed. They all acted as though they were members of the same household; and yet many of them had not met before that day. If they caught the bough they were jumping after, they laughed at that, and if they did not catch it, they laughed at that, too. They fought for the hook to draw it down with; those who got it laughed, and those who did not get it, laughed also. Godfather hobbled after them with his cane, and offered all the hindrance in his power. Those whom he caught laughed because he caught them, and those whom he did not catch laughed because he did not catch them. But they all laughed at Arne for being sober, and when he tried to laugh, they laughed, because he was laughing at last.

They seated themselves finally on a large hill, godfather in the centre, and all the girls around him. The hill commanded a fine outlook; the sun scorched; but the girls heeded it not, they sat, casting nut-husks and shells at one another, giving the kernels to godfather. He tried to quiet them at last, striking at them with his

cane, as far as he could reach; for now he wanted them to tell stories, above all, something amusing. But to get them started seemed more difficult than to stop a carriage on a hillside. Godfather began himself. There were many who did not want to listen; for they knew already everything he had to tell; but they all ended by listening attentively. Before they knew what they were about, they sat in the centre, and each took her turn in following his example as best she could. Now Arne was much astonished to find that just in proportion to the noise the girls had made before was the gravity of the stories they now told. Love was the chief theme of these.

"But you, Aasa, have a good one; I remember that from last year," said godfather, turning to a plump girl with a round, pleasant face, who sat braiding the hair of a younger sister, whose head was in her lap.

"Several that are here may know that," said she.

"Well, give it to us anyway," they begged.

"I will not have to be urged long," said she, and, still braiding, she told and sang, as follows: —

"There was a grown-up youth who tended cattle, and he was in the habit of driving his

herds upward, along the banks of a broad stream. High up on his way, there was a crag which hung out so far over the stream, that when he stood on it he could call out to any one on the other side. For on the other side of the stream there was a herd-girl whom he could see all day long, but he could not come over to her.

'Now, tell me thy name, thou girl that art sitting,
Up there with thy sheep, so busily knitting?'

he asked, over and over again, for many days, until at last one day there came the answer, —

'My name floats about like a duck in wet weather; —
Come over, thou boy in the cap of brown leather.'

"But this made the youth no wiser than before, and he thought he would pay no further heed to the girl. This was not so easy, though, for, let him drive the cattle where he would, he was always drawn back to the crag. Then the youth grew alarmed, and called over: —

'Well, who is your father, and where are you biding?
On the road to the church I have ne'er seen you riding.'

"The youth more than half believed her, in fact, to be a hulder.[1]

'My house is burned down, and my father is drowned,
And the road to the church-hill I never have found.'

[1] The hulder dwells in forests and mountains, appears like a beautiful woman, and usually wears a blue petticoat and a white hood. She has a long tail, which she tries to conceal when she is among people. She is fond of cattle.

"Now this also made the youth no wiser than before. By day he lingered on the crag, and by night he dreamed that she was dancing around him, and gave him a lash with a great cow's-tail each time he tried to take hold of her. Soon he could not sleep at all, neither could he work, and the poor youth was in a wretched state. Again he called aloud, —

'If thou art a hulder, then pray do not spell me, —
If thou art a maiden, then hasten to tell me?'

"But there came no answer, and then he was sure that this was a hulder. He gave up tending cattle, but it was just as bad, for wherever he went, or whatever he did, he thought of the fair hulder who blew on the horn.

"Then one day, as he stood chopping wood, there came a girl through the yard who actually looked like the hulder. But when she came nearer, it was not she. He thought much about this; then the girl came back, and in the distance it was the hulder, and he ran directly toward her. But the moment he came near her it was not she.

"After this, let the youth be at church, at a dance, at other social gatherings, or where he would, the girl was there too; when he was far from her, she seemed to be the hulder

near to her, she seemed to be another; he asked her then whether it were she or not; but she laughed at him. It is just as well to spring into it as to creep into it, thought the youth, and so he married the girl.

"No sooner was this done than the youth ceased to like the girl. Away from her, he longed for her; but when with her, he longed for one he did not see; therefore he was harsh toward his wife; she bore this and was silent.

"But one day, when he was searching for the horses, he found his way to the crag, and sitting down, he called out, —

'Like fairy moonlight to me thou seemest,
Like midsummer fires from afar thou gleamest.'

"He thought it did him good to sit there, and he fell into the way of going thither whenever anything went amiss at home. The wife wept when she was left alone.

"But one day, while the youth was sitting on the crag, the hulder, her living self, appeared on the opposite side, and blew her horn. He eagerly cried, —

'Ah, dear, art thou come! all around thee is shining!
Ah, blow now again! I am sitting here pining.'

Then she answered, —

'Away from thy mind the dreams I am blowing, —
The rye is all rotting for want of mowing.'

"But the youth was frightened, and went home again. Before long, though, he was so tired of his wife that he felt compelled to wander off to the wood and take his seat on the crag. Then a voice sang, —

'I dreamed thou wast here; ho, hasten to bind me!
No, not over there, but behind you will find me.' [1]

"The youth started up, looked about him, and espied a green skirt disappearing through the woods. He pursued. Now there was a chase through the woods. As fleet of foot as the hulder was, no mortal could be; he cast steel [2] over her again and again; she ran on the same as before. By and by she began to grow tired. The youth knew this from her foot-fall, though her form convinced him that it was the hulder herself, and none other. 'You shall surely be mine now,' thought the youth, and suddenly flung his arms about her with such force that both he and she rolled far down the hill before they could stop. Then the hulder laughed until the youth thought the mountains

[1] Translated by Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.

[2] Shooting or flinging steel over the head of hulders, trolls, etc., makes the witchery vanish. Thus also a piece of steel laid in the cradle prevents hulders from exchanging little children for their own.

fairly rang; he took her on his knee, and she looked so fair, just as he had once thought his wife would look.

"'Oh, dear, who are you that are so fair?' asked the youth, and as he caressed her, he felt that her cheeks were warm and glowing.

"'Why, good gracious, I am your wife,' said she."

The girls laughed, and thought the youth was very foolish. But godfather asked Arne if he had been listening.

"Well, now, I will tell you something," said a little girl, with a little round face, and such a very little nose.

"There was a little youth who wanted very much to woo a little maiden; they were both grown up, yet were both very small indeed. But the youth could not muster up courage enough to begin his wooing. He always joined her after church, but they did not then get beyond the weather in their talk; he sought her at the dances, and he danced her almost to death, but talk with her he could not. 'You must learn to write, and then you will not have to,' said he to himself, and so the youth took to writing; but he never thought he could do well enough, and so he wrote a whole year before he dared think of a letter. Then the

trouble was how to deliver it so that no one should see, and he waited until once they chanced to meet alone behind the church.

"'I have a letter for you,' said the youth.

"'But I cannot read writing,' answered the maiden.

"And the youth got no further.

"Then he took service at her father's house, and hung round her the whole day long. Once he came very near speaking to her; he had already opened his mouth, when there flew into it a large fly. 'If only no one comes and takes her from me,' thought the youth. But there came no one to take her from him, because she was so small.

"Some one did come along, though, at last, for he was small too. The youth well knew what he was after, and when he and the girl went up-stairs together, the youth made his way to the key-hole. Now he who was within offered himself. 'Alas, dunce that I am, not to have made more haste!' thought the youth. He who was inside kissed the girl right on the lips. 'That must have tasted good,' thought the youth. But he who was inside had drawn the girl down on his knee. 'What a world we live in!' said the youth, and wept. This the girl heard, and went to the door.

"'What do you want of me, you ugly boy, that you never give me any peace?'

"'I? — I only wanted to ask you if I might be your groomsman.'

"'No; my brothers are to be the groomsmen,' answered the girl, — and slammed the door in his face.

"And the youth got no further."

The girls laughed a great deal at this story, and sent a shower of husks flying round after it.

Godfather now wanted Eli Böen to tell something.

What should it be?

Why, she might tell what she had told over on the hill, when he was with them, the time she gave him the new garters. It was a good while before Eli was ready, for she laughed so hard, but at last she told: —

"A girl and a boy were walking together on the same road. 'Why, see the thrush that is following us,' said the girl. 'It is I whom it is following,' said the boy. 'It is just as likely to be me,' answered the girl. 'That we can soon see,' remarked the boy; 'now you take the lower road, and I will take the upper one, and we will meet at the top of the hill.' They did so. 'Was it not following me?' asked the boy, when they met. 'No, it was following me,'

answered the girl. 'Then there must be two.' They walked together again a little way, but then there was only one thrush; the boy thought it flew on his side; but the girl thought it flew on hers. 'The deuce! I'll not bother my head any more about that thrush,' said the boy. 'Nor I either,' replied the girl.

"But no sooner had they said this than the thrush was gone. 'It was on *your* side,' said the boy. 'No, I thank you; I saw plainly it was on *yours*. But there! There it comes again!' called out the girl. 'Yes, it is on *my* side!' cried the boy. But now the girl became angry. 'May all the plagues take me if I walk with you any longer!' and she went her own way. Then the thrush left the boy, and the way became so tedious that he began to call out. She answered. 'Is the thrush with you?' shouted the boy. 'No, it is with you.' 'Oh, dear! You must come here again, then perhaps it will come too.' And the girl came again; they took each other by the hand and walked together. 'Kvit, kvit, kvit, kvit!' was heard on the girl's side. 'Kvit, kvit, kvit, kvit!' was heard on the boy's side. 'Kvit, kvit, kvit, kvit, kvit, kvit, kvit!' was heard on both sides, and when they came to look, there were a thousand million thrushes round about

them. 'Why, how strange!' said the girl, and looked up at the boy. 'Bless you!' said the boy, and caressed the girl."

This story all the girls thought fine.

Then godfather suggested that they should tell what they had dreamed the night before, and he would decide who had had the finest dream.

What! tell their dreams? No, indeed! And there was no end to the laughing and whispering. But then one after another began to remark that she had had such a fine dream last night; others, again, that, fine as the ones they had had, it could not by any means be. And finally, they all were seized with a desire to tell their dreams. But it must not be out loud, it must only be to *one*, and that must by no means be godfather. Arne was sitting quietly on the hill, and so he was the one to whom they dared tell their dreams.

Arne took a seat beneath a hazel, and then she who had told the first story came to him. She thought a long time, and then told as follows: —

"I dreamed I stood by a great lake. Then I saw some one go on the water, and it was one whom I will not name. He climbed up in a large pond-lily, and sat and sang. But I

went out on one of those large leaves that the pond-lily has, and which lie and float; on it I wanted to row over to him. But no sooner had I stepped on the leaf than it began to sink with me, and I grew much alarmed and cried. Then he came rowing over to me in the pond-lily, lifted me up to where he sat, and we rowed all over the lake. Was not that a nice dream?"

The little maiden who had told the little story now came.

"I dreamed I had caught a little bird, and I was so happy that I did not want to let it go until I got home. But there I did not dare let go of it, lest father and mother should tell me I must let it out again. So I went up in the garret with it, but there the cat was lurking, and so I could not let go of it there either. Then I did not know what to do, so I took it up in the hay-loft; but, good gracious! there were so many cracks there that it could easily fly away! Well, then I went out in the yard again, and there I thought stood one whom I will not name. He was playing with a large, black dog. 'I would rather play with that bird of yours,' said he, and came close up to me. But I thought I started to run, and he and the large dog after me, and thus I ran all round the yard; but then mother opened

the front door, drew me quickly in, and slammed the door. Outside, the boy stood laughing, with his face against the window-pane. 'See, here is the bird!' said he, — and, just think, he really had the bird! Was not that a funny dream?"

Then she came who had told about all the thrushes, — Eli they had called her. It was the Eli he had seen that evening in the boat and in the water. She was the same and yet not the same, so grown-up and pretty she looked as she sat there, with her delicately cut face and slender form. She laughed immoderately, and therefore it was long before she could control herself; but then she told as follows: —

"I had been feeling so glad that I was coming to the nutting-party to-day that I dreamed last night I was sitting here on the hill. The sun shone brightly, and I had a whole lapful of nuts. But then there came a little squirrel, right in among the nuts, and it sat on its hind legs in my lap and ate them all up. Was not that a funny dream?"

Yet other dreams were told Arne, and then he was to decide which was the finest. He had to take a long time to consider, and meanwhile godfather started off with the whole crowd for the gard, and Arne was to follow

They sprang down the hill, formed in a row when they had reached the plain, and sang all the way to the house.

Arne still sat there listening to the singing. The sun fell directly on the group, it shone on their white sleeves; soon they twined their arms about each other's waists; they went dancing across the meadow, godfather after them with his cane, because they were treading down his grass. Arne thought no more about the dreams. Soon he even left off watching the girls; his thoughts wandered far beyond the valley, as did the fine sunbeams, and he sat alone there on the hill and spun. Before he was aware of it, he was entangled in a close web of melancholy; he yearned to break away, and never in the world before so ardently as now. He faithfully promised himself that when he got home he would talk with his mother, come of it what would.

His thoughts grew stronger, and drifted into the song, —

"Over the lofty mountains."

Words had never flowed so readily as now, nor had they ever blended so surely into verse, — they almost seemed like girls sitting around on a hill. He had a scrap of paper about him and placing it on his knee, he wrote. When

the song was complete, he arose, like one who was released, felt that he could not see people, and took the forest road home, although he knew that the night, too, would be needed for this. The first time he sat down to rest on the way, he felt for the song, that he might sing it aloud as he went along, and let it be borne all over the parish ; but he found he had left it in the place where it was written.

One of the girls went up the hill to look for him, did not find him, but found his song.

CHAPTER X.

To talk with the mother was more easily thought than done. Arne alluded to Kristian and the letter that never came ; but the mother went away from him, and for whole days after he thought her eyes looked red. He had also another indication of her feelings, and that was that she prepared unusually good meals for him.

He had to go up in the woods to fetch an armful of fuel one day; the road led through the forest, and just where he was to do his chopping was the place where people went to pick whortleberries in the autumn. He had put down his axe in order to take off his jacket, and was just about beginning, when two girls came walking along with berry pails. It was his wont to hide himself rather than meet girls, and so he did now.

" O dear, O dear! What a lot of berries! Eli, Eli! "

" Yes, dear, I see them."

" Well, then, do not go any farther ; here are many pailfuls! "

"I thought there was a rustling in that bush over there!"

"Oh, you must be mad!" and the girls rushed at each other, and put their arms about each other's waists. They stood for a long while so still, that they scarcely breathed.

"It is surely nothing; let us go on picking!"

"Yes, I really think we will."

And so they began to gather berries.

"It was very kind of you, Eli, to come over to the parsonage to-day. Have you anything to tell me?"

"I have been at godfather's."

"Yes, you told me that; but have you nothing about *him*, — you know who?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Oh, oh! Eli, is that so? Make haste; tell me!"

"He has been there again!"

"Oh, nonsense!"

"Yes, indeed; both father and mother pretended they did not see it, but I went up in the garret and hid."

"More, more! Did he follow you there?"

"I think father told him where I was; he is always so provoking."

"And so he came? Sit down, sit down here beside me. Well, so he came?"

"Yes; but he did not say much, for he was so bashful."

"Every word! Do you hear? every word!"

"'Are you afraid of me?' said he. 'Why should I be afraid?' said I. 'You know what it is I want of you,' said he, and sat down on the chest beside me."

"Beside you!"

"And then he put his arm round my waist."

"His arm round your waist? Are you wild?"

"I wanted to get away from him, but he would not let me go. 'Dear Eli,' said he," — she laughed, and the other girl laughed too.

"Well? well?"

"'Will you be my wife?'"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And then both — "Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!"

Finally, the laughter, too, had to come to an end, and then a long silence ensued. After a while, the first one asked, but softly, "Say, — was it not too bad that he put his arm round your waist?"

Either the other one made no reply to this, or else she spoke in such a low tone that it could not be heard; perhaps, too, she answered only with a smile. Presently the first one asked: —

"Have neither your father nor your mother said anything since?"

"Father came up and looked at me, but I kept hiding; for he laughed every time he saw me."

"But your mother?"

"Why, she said nothing; but she was less harsh than usual."

"Well, you certainly refused him?"

"Of course."

Then there was a long silence again.

"Eli!"

"Well?"

"Do you think any one will ever come that way to me?"

"Yes, to be sure."

"How you talk! O—h! say, Eli? What if he should put his arm round my waist?" She covered her face.

There was much laughter, afterwards whispering and tittering.

The girls soon went away. They had neither seen Arne, nor the axe and the jacket, and he was glad.

Some days later he put Upland Knut in the houseman's place under Kampen.

"You shall no longer be lonely," said Arne.

Arne himself took to steady work. He had

early learned to cut with the hand-saw, for he had himself added much to the house at home. Now he wanted to work at his trade, for he knew it was well to have some definite occupation; it was also good for him to get out among people; and so changed had he gradually become, that he longed for this whenever he had kept to himself for a while. Thus it came to pass that he was at the parsonage for a time that winter doing carpentering, and the two girls were often together there. Arne wondered, when he saw them, who it could be that was now courting Eli Böen.

It so happened one day, when they went out for a ride, that Arne had to drive for the young lady of the parsonage and Eli; he had good ears, yet could not hear what they were talking about; sometimes Mathilde spoke to him, at which Eli laughed and hid her face. Once Mathilde asked if it was true he could make verses. "No!" he said promptly: then they both laughed, chattered, and laughed. This made him indignant, and he pretended not to see them.

Once he was sitting in the servants' hall, when there was dancing there. Mathilde and Eli both came in to look on. They were disputing about something in the corner where

they stood. Eli would not, but Mathilde would, and she won. Then they both crossed the floor to him, courtesied, and asked whether he could dance. He answered "No," and then they both turned, laughed, and ran away. "They keep up a perpetual laughter," thought Arne, and became sober. But the priest had a little adopted son, about ten or twelve years old, of whom Arne thought a good deal; from this boy Arne learned to dance when no one else was present.

Eli had a little brother about the same age as the priest's adopted son. These two were playmates, and Arne made sleds, skees,[1] and snares for them; and he often talked with them about their sisters, especially about Eli. One day Eli's brother brought word that Arne should not be so careless with his hair.

"Who said so?"

"Eli said so; but I was not to tell that she said so."

Some days after, Arne sent a message to Eli that she should laugh a little less. The boy came back with the reply that Arne should laugh a little more.

Once the boy asked for something he had written. Arne let him have it, and thought

[1] A kind of long snow-shoe.

no more of it. After a while the boy thought he would please Arne with the tidings that both the girls liked his writing very much.

"Why, have they seen it?"

"Yes, it was for them I wanted it."

Arne asked the boys to bring him something their sisters had written; they did so. Arne corrected the mistakes with a carpenter's pencil. He asked the boys to place the paper where it could easily be found. Afterwards he found it again in his jacket pocket, but at the bottom was written, "Corrected by a conceited fellow!"

The next day Arne finished his work at the parsonage, and set out for home. So gentle as he was this winter, his mother had never seen him since those sorrowful days after his father's death. He read the sermon for her, went with her to church, and was very kind to her. But she well knew it was all to get her consent to journey away from her when spring came. Then one day he had a message from Böen to know if he would come there and do some carpentering.

Arne was quite startled, and answered "Yes," as though he scarcely knew what he was saying. No sooner had the messenger gone than the mother said,

"You may well be astonished! From Böen?"

"Is that so strange?" asked Arne, but did not look at her as he spoke.

"From Böen!" cried the mother, once more.

"Well, why not as well from there as from another gard?" Arne now looked up a little.

"From Böen and Birgit Böen! Baard, who gave your father the blow that was his ruin, and that for Birgit Böen's sake!"

"What do you say?" now cried the youth "Was that Baard Böen?"

Son and mother stood and looked at each other. Between the two a whole life was unfolded, and this was a moment wherein they could see the black thread which all along had been woven through it. They fell later to talking about the father's proud days, when old El. Böen herself had courted him for her daughter Birgit, and got a refusal. They went through his whole life just as far as where he was knocked down, and both found out that Baard's fault had been the least. Nevertheless, it was he who had given the father that fatal blow, — he it was.

"Am I not yet done with father?" then thought Arne, and decided at the same moment to go.

When Arne came walking, with the hand

saw on his shoulder, over the ice and up toward Böen, it seemed to him a pretty gard. The house always looked as though it were newly painted; he was a little chilled, and that was perhaps why it seemed so cozy to him. He did not go directly in, but went beyond toward the stable, where a flock of shaggy goats were standing in the snow, gnawing at the bark of some fir branches. A shepherd dog walked to and fro on the barn-bridge, and barked as though the devil himself was coming to the gard; but the moment Arne stood still, he wagged his tail and let him pat him. The kitchen door on the farther side of the house was often opened, and Arne looked down there each time; but it was either the dairy-maid, with tubs and pails, or the cook, who was throwing something out to the goats. Inside the barn they were threshing with frequent strokes, and to the left, in front of the wood-shed, stood a boy chopping wood; behind him there were many layers of wood piled up.

Arne put down his saw and went into the kitchen; there white sand was spread on the floor, and finely cut juniper leaves strewed over it; on the walls glittered copper kettles, and crockery stood in rows. They were cooking dinner. Arne asked to speak with Baard. "G

into the sitting-room," some one said, pointing to the door. He went; there was no latch to the door, but a brass handle; it was cheerful in there, and brightly painted, the ceiling was decorated with many roses, the cupboards were red, with the owner's name in black, the bedstead was also red, but bordered with blue stripes. By the stove sat a broad-shouldered man, with a mild face, and long, yellow hair; he was putting hoops about some pails; by the long table sat a tall, slender woman, with a high linen cap on her head, and dressed in tight-fitting clothes; she was sorting corn into two heaps. Besides these there were no others in the room.

"Good day, and bless the work!" said Arne, drawing off his hat. Both looked up; the man smiled, and asked who it was.

"It is he who is to do carpentering."

The man smiled more, and said, as he nodded his head and began his work again, —

"Well, then, it is Arne Kampen!"

"Arne Kampen?" cried the wife, and stared fixedly before her.

The man looked up hastily, and smiled again. "The son of tailor Nils," he said, and went on once more with his work.

After a while, the wife got up, crossed the

floor to the shelf, turned, went to the cupboard, turned again, and as she at last was rummaging in a table drawer, she asked, without looking up, —

"Is *he* to work *here?*"

"Yes, that he is," said the man, also without looking up. "It seems no one has asked you to sit down," he observed, addressing himself to Arne.

The latter took a seat; the wife left the room, the man continued to work; and so Arne asked if he too should begin.

"Let us first have dinner."

The wife did not come in again; but the next time the kitchen-door opened it was Eli who came. She appeared at first not to notice Arne; when he rose to go to her, she stood still, and half turned to give him her hand, but she did not look at him. They exchanged a few words; the father worked on. Eli had her hair braided, wore a tight-sleeved dress, was slender and straight, had round wrists and small hands. She laid the table; the working-people dined in the next room, but Arne with the family in this one; it so happened that they had their meals separately to-day; usually they all ate at the same table in the large, light kitchen.

"Is not mother coming?" asked the man.

"No, she is up-stairs weighing wool."

"Have you asked her?"

"Yes; but she says she does not want anything."

There was silence for a while.

"But it is cold up-stairs."

"She did not want me to make a fire."

After dinner Arne began work; in the evening he was again with the family in the sitting-room. Then the wife, too, was there. The women were sewing. The husband was busy with some trifles, and Arne helped him; there was a prolonged silence, for Eli, who usually led in conversation, was also silent. Arne thought with dismay that it probably was often thus at his own home; but he realized it now for the first time. Eli drew a long breath at last, as though she had restrained herself long enough, and then she fell to laughing. Then the father also laughed, and Arne, too, thought it was laughable, and joined in. From this time forth they talked of various things; but it ended in Arne and Eli doing most of the talking, the father putting in an occasional word. But once, when Arne had been speaking for some time and happened to look up, he met the eyes of the mother, Birgit; she had dropped her sewing, and sat staring fixedly at him. Now she

picked up her work again, but at the first word he spoke she raised her eyes.

Bed-time came, and each one went his way. Arne thought he would notice the dream he had the first night in a new place; but there seemed to be no sense in it. The whole day long he had talked little or none with the master of the gard, but at night it was of him he dreamed. The last thing was that Baard sat playing cards with tailor Nils. The latter was very angry and pale in the face; but Baard smiled and won the game.

Arne remained several days, during which time there was scarcely any talking, but a great deal of work. Not only those in the family room were silent, but the servants, the tenants, even the women. There was an old dog on the gard that barked every time strangers came; but the gard people never heard the dog without saying "hush!" and then he went growling off and laid down again. At home at Kampen there was a large weather-vane on the house, which turned with the wind; there was a still larger vane here, to which Arne's attention was attracted because it did not turn. When there was a strong current of wind, the vane struggled to get loose, and Arne looked at it until he felt compelled to go up on the roof and set the

vane free. It was not frozen fast, as he had supposed, but a pin was stuck through it that it might be kept still. This Arne took out and threw down; the pin struck Baard, who came walking along. He glanced up.

"What are you doing there?"

"I am letting loose the vane."

"Do not do so; it makes such a wailing noise when it is in motion."

Arne sat astride the gable.

"That is better than always being quiet."

Baard looked up at Arne, and Arne looked down on Baard; then Baard smiled.

"He who has to howl when he talks had much better keep silent, I am sure."

Now it often happens that words haunt us long after they were uttered, especially when they were the last ones heard. So these words haunted Arne when he crept down in the cold from the roof, and were still with him in the evening when he entered the family room. Eli was standing, in the twilight, by a window, gazing out over the ice which lay glittering beneath the moon's beams. Arne went to the other window and looked out as she was doing. Within all was cozy and quiet, without it was cold; a sharp wind swept across the valley, so shaking the trees that the shadows they

cast in the moonlight did not lie still, but went groping about in the snow. From the parsonage there glimmered a light, opening out and closing in, assuming many shapes and colors, as light is apt to do when one gazes at it too long. The mountain loomed up beyond, dark and gloomy, with romance in its depths and moonshine on its upper banks of snow. The sky was aglow with stars, and a little flickering northern light appeared in one quarter of the horizon, but did not spread. A short distance from the window, down toward the lake, there were some trees whose shadows kept prowling from one to the other, but the great ash stood alone, writing on the snow.

The night was very still, — only now and then something shrieked and howled with a long, wailing cry.

"What is that?" asked Arne.

"It is the weather-vane," said Eli; and afterwards she continued more softly, as though to herself: "It must have been let loose."

But Arne had been feeling like one who wanted to speak and could not. Now he said: —

"Do you remember the story about the thrushes that sang?"

"Yes."

"Why, to be sure, it was you who told that one! It was a pretty story."

She said, in so gentle a voice that it seemed as though it were the first time he heard it, —

"I often think there is something that sings when it is quite still."

"That is the good within ourselves."

She looked at him as though there were something too much in that answer; they were both quiet afterward. Then she asked, as she traced figures with one finger on the window-pane, —

"Have you made any songs lately?"

He blushed; but this she did not see. Therefore she asked again, —

"How do you manage when you make songs?"

"Would you really like to know?"

"Oh, yes."

"I hoard up the thoughts that others are in the habit of letting go," he answered evasively.

She was long silent, for she had doubtless been making an attempt at a song or two. What if she had had those thoughts and let them go.

"That is strange, said she, as though to herself, and fell to tracing figures on the pane again.

"I made a song after I had seen you the first time."

"Where was that?"

"Over by the parsonage, the evening you left there. I saw you in the lake."

She laughed, then was still a while.

"Let me hear that song."

Arne had never before done such a thing, but now he sang for her the song, —

> "Fair Venevill bounded on lithesome feet,
> Her lover to meet," etc.

Eli stood there very attentive; she stood there long after he was through. At last she burst out, —

"Oh, how I pity her!"

"It seems as though I had not made it myself," said Arne, for he felt ashamed at having produced it. Nor did he understand how he had come to do so. He remained standing there as if looking after the song.

Then she said: "But I hope it will not be that way with me!"

"No, no, no! I was only thinking of myself."

"Is that to be your fate, then?"

"I do not know; but I felt so at that time — indeed, I do not understand it now, but I once had such a heavy heart."

"That was strange." She began to write on the window-pane again.

The next day, when Arne came in to dinner he went over to the window. Outside it was gray and foggy, within warm and pleasant; but on the window-pane a finger had traced "Arne, Arne, Arne!" and over again "Arne." It was the window where Eli had stood the preceding evening.

But Eli did not come down-stairs that day; she was feeling ill. She had not been well at all of late; she had said so herself, and it was plainly to be seen.

CHAPTER XI.

A DAY later Arne came in and announced that he had just heard on the gard that the priest's daughter Mathilde had that very moment started for the town, as she thought, for a few days, but, as had been decided, to stay there for a year or two. Eli had heard nothing of this before, and fell fainting.

It was the first time Arne had seen any one faint, and he was much alarmed; he ran for the maid-servants, they went for the parents, who started at once; there was confusion all over the gard, even the shepherd-dog barked on the barn-bridge. When Arne came in again, later, the mother was on her knees by the bedside, the father stood holding the sick girl's head. The maid-servants were running, one for water, another for medicine, which was kept in a cupboard, a third was unfastening Eli's jacket at the throat.

"The Lord help and bless us!" cried the mother. "It was certainly wrong that we said nothing to her; it was you, Baard, who

would have it so. The Lord help and bless us!"

Baard made no reply.

"I said we had better tell her; but nothing is ever done as I wish. The Lord help and bless us! You are always so underhand with her, Baard; you do not understand her; you do not know what it is to care for any one."

Baard still made no reply.

"She is not like others; they can bear sorrow, but it completely upsets her, poor thing, she is so slight. And especially now when she is not well at all. Wake up again, my dear child, and we will be kind to you! Wake up again, Eli, my own dear child, and do not grieve us so!"

Then Baard said,—

"You are either too silent, or you talk too much;" and he looked over at Arne, as though he did not wish him to hear all this, but to go away. As the maid-servants remained in the room, however, Arne thought that he might stay, too, but he walked to the window. Now the patient rallied so far that she could look about her and recognize people; but at the same moment her memory returned; she shrieked "Mathilde," burst into hysterical weeping, and sobbed until it was painful to be in the

room with her. The mother tried to comfort her; the father had placed himself where he might be seen; but the sick girl waved her hand to them. "Go away!" she cried, "I do not love you!"

"Good gracious! You do not love your parents?" said the mother.

"No! You are cruel to me, and take from me the only joy I have!"

"Eli, Eli! Do not speak such dreadful words!" begged the mother.

"Yes, mother," she shrieked; "now I must say it! Yes, mother! You want me to marry that hateful man, and I will not. You shut me up here, where I am never happy, except when I am to go out! You take Mathilde from me, the only person I love and long for in the world! O God, what will become of me when Mathilde is no longer here — especially now that I have so much, so much I cannot manage when I have no one to talk with?"

"But you really have so seldom been with her lately," said Baard.

"What did that matter when I had her over at the window yonder!" answered the sick girl, and she cried in such a child-like way, that it seemed to Arne as though he had never before seen anything like it.

"But you could not see her there," said Baard.

"I could see the gard," answered she; and the mother added, hotly, —

"You do not understand such things at all."

Then Baard said no more.

"Now I can never go to the window!" said Eli. "I went there in the morning when I got up; in the evening I sat there in the moonlight: and I went there when I had no one else to go to. Mathilde, Mathilde!"

She writhed in the bed, and again gave way to hysterical weeping. Baard sat down on a stool near by and watched her.

But Eli did not get over this as soon as her parents may have expected. Toward evening they first saw that she was likely to have a protracted illness, the seeds of which had doubtless been gathering for some time; and Arne was called in to assist in carrying her up to her own room. She was unconscious, and lay very pale and still; the mother sat down beside her; the father stood at the foot of the bed and looked on; afterwards he went down to his work. Arne did the same; but that night when he went to bed he prayed for her, prayed that she, young and fair as she was, might have a happy

life, and that no one might shut out joy from her.

The following day the father and mother sat talking together when Arne came in; the mother had been shedding tears. Arne asked how things were going; each waited for the other to speak, and therefore it was long before he got a reply; but finally the father said, "It looks pretty bad."

Later, Arne heard that Eli had been delirious the whole night; or, as the father said, had been raving. Now she lay violently ill, knew no one, would not take any food, and the parents were just sitting there, deliberating whether they should call in the doctor. When, later, they went up-stairs to the sick girl, and Arne was left alone again, he felt as though life and death were both up there, but he sat outside.

In a few days, though, she was better. Once when the father was keeping watch, she took a fancy to have Narrifas, the bird which Mathilde had given her, standing beside the bed. Then Baard told her the truth, that in all this confusion the bird had been forgotten, and that it was dead. The mother came just while Baard was telling this, and she burst out in the door, — "Good gracious me! how heedless you are, Baard, to tell such things to that sick

child! See, now she is fainting away again; Heaven forgive you for what you have done!"

Every time the patient revived she screamed for the bird, said that it would never go well with Mathilde since Narrifas was dead, wanted to go to her, and fell into a swoon again. Baard stood there and looked on until he could bear it no longer; then he wanted to help wait on her too; but the mother pushed him away, saying that she would take care of the sick girl alone. Then Baard gazed at both of them a long while, after which he put on his cap with both hands, turned, and went out.

The priest and his wife came over later; for the illness had taken fresh hold on Eli, and had become so bad that they knew not whether it was tending to life or death.

Both the priest and the priest's wife reasoned with Baard, and urged that he was too harsh with Eli; they had heard about the bird, and the priest told him bluntly that such conduct was rough; he would take the child home to the parsonage, he said, as soon as she had improved enough to be moved. The priest's wife finally would not even see Baard; she wept and sat with the sick girl, sent for the doctor, took his orders herself, and came over several times each day to carry them out.

Baard went wandering about from place to place in the yard, going chiefly where he could be alone; he would often stand still for a long time, then straighten his cap with both hands, and find something to do.

The mother did not speak to him any more; they scarcely looked at each other. Baard went up to the sick girl's room several times each day; he took off his shoes at the bottom of the stairs, laid down his hat outside of the door, which he opened cautiously. The moment he came in, Birgit would turn as though she had not seen him, and then sit as before, with her head in her hand, looking straight before her and at the sick girl. The latter lay still and pale, unconscious of anything about her. Baard would stand a while at the foot of the bed, look at them both, and say nothing. Once, when Eli moved as though about to awaken, he stole away directly as softly as he had come.

Arne often thought that words had now been exchanged between husband and wife and parents and child, which had been long brewing, and which would not soon be forgotten. He longed to get away, although he would have liked first to know how Eli's illness would end. But this he could learn even if he left, he thought; he went, therefore, to Baard, and said

that he wished to go home; the work for which he had come was done. Baard sat outside on the chopping-block when Arne came to tell him this. He sat digging in the snow with a pin. Arne knew the pin; for it was the same that had fastened the weather vane. Without looking up Baard said, —

"I suppose it is not pleasant to be here now, but I feel as if I did not want you to leave."

Baard said no more; nor did Arne speak. He stood a while, then went away and busied himself with some work, as though it were decided that he should remain.

Later, when Arne was called in to dinner, Baard still sat on the chopping-block. Arne went over to him and asked how Eli was getting on.

"I think she must be pretty bad to-day," said Baard; "I see that mother is crying."

Arne felt as though some one had bidden him to sit down, and he sat down directly opposite Baard on the end of a fallen tree.

"I have been thinking of your father these days," said Baard, so unexpectedly, that Arne could make no reply. "You know, I dare say, what there was between us two?"

"Yes, I know."

"Ah, well, you only know half, as might

have been expected, and naturally lay the greatest blame on me."

Arne answered presently: "You have doubtless settled that matter with your God, as my father has surely done."

"Ah, well, that may be as one takes it," answered Baard. "When I found this pin again, it seemed so strange to me that you should come here and loosen the vane. Just as well first as last, thought I." He had taken off his cap and sat looking into it.

Arne did not yet understand that by this Baard meant that he now wanted to talk with him about his father. Indeed, he still did not understand it, even after Baard was well under way, so little was this like the man. But what had been working before in his mind, he gradually comprehended as the story advanced, and if he had hitherto had respect for this blundering but thoroughly good man, it was not lessened now.

"I might have been about fourteen years old," said Baard, then paused, as he did from time to time throughout his whole story, said a few words more, and paused again in such a manner that his story bore the strong impress of having every word weighed. "I might have been about fourteen years old when I became

acquainted with your father, who was of the same age. He was very wild, and could not bear to have any one above him. And what he never could forgive me was, that I was the head of the class when we were confirmed, and he was number two. He often offered to wrestle with me, but nothing ever came of it; I suppose because we were neither of us sure of ourselves. But it is strange that he fought every day, and no misfortune befell him; the one time I tried my hand it turned out as badly as could be; but, to be sure, I had waited a long time too.

"Nils fluttered about all the girls and they about him. There was only one I wanted, but he took her from me at every dance, at every wedding, at every party; it was the one to whom I am now married. . . . I often had a desire, as I sat looking on, to make a trial of strength with him, just because of this matter; but I was afraid I might lose, and I knew that if I did so I should lose her too. When the others had gone, I would lift the weights he had lifted, kick the beam he had kicked, but the next time he danced away from me with the girl, I did not dare tackle him, although it chanced once, as Nils stood joking with her right before my face, that I laid hold of a good sized fellow who stood by and tossed him against

the beam, as though for sport. Nils grew pale, too, that time.

"If he had only been kind to the girl; but he was false to her, and that evening after evening. I almost think she cared more for him each time. Then it was that the last thing happened. I thought now it must either break or bear. Nor did the Lord want him to go about any longer; and therefore he fell a little more heavily than I had intended. I never saw him after that."

They sat for a long time silent. Finally Baard continued: —

"I offered myself again. She answered neither yes nor no; and so I thought she would like me better afterwards. We were married; the wedding took place down in the valley, at the house of her father's sister, who left her property to her; we began with plenty, and what we then had has increased. Our gards lay alongside of each other, and they have since been thrown into one, as had been my idea from boyhood up. But many other things did not turn out as I had planned."

He was long silent; Arne thought, for a while, he was weeping; it was not so. But he spoke in a still gentler tone than usual when he began again, —

"At first she was quiet and very sorrowful. I had nothing to say for her comfort, and so I was silent. Later, she fell at times into that commanding way that you have perhaps noticed in her; yet it was after all a change, and so I was silent then, too. But a truly happy day I have not had since I was married, and that has been now for twenty years."

He broke the pin in two; then he sat a while looking at the pieces.

"When Eli grew to be a large girl, I thought she would find more happiness among strangers than here. It is seldom that I have insisted on anything; it usually has been wrong, too, when I have; and so it was with this. The mother yearned for her child, although only the lake parted them; and at last I found out that Eli was not under the best influences over at the parsonage, for there is really much good-natured nonsense about the priest's family; but I found it out too late. Now she seems to care for neither father nor mother."

He had taken his cap off again; now his long hair fell over his eyes; he stroked it aside, and put on his cap with both hands, as though about to go; but as in getting up he turned toward the house, he stopped and added, with a glance at the chamber window, —

"I thought it was best she and Mathilde should not bid each other good-by; but that proved to be wrong. I told her the little bird was dead, for it was my fault, you know, and it seemed to me right to confess; but that was wrong too. And so it is with everything. I have always meant to do the best, but it has turned out to be the worst; and now it has gone so far that they speak ill of me, both wife and daughter, and I am alone here."

A girl now called out to them that dinner was getting cold. Baard got up. "I hear the horses neighing," said he, "somebody must have forgotten them;" and with this he went over to the stable to give them hay.

CHAPTER XII.

Eli was very weak after her illness; the mother sat over her night and day, and was never down-stairs; the father made his usual visits up to the sick-room in his stocking feet, and leaving his cap outside of the door. Arne was still at the gard; he and the father sat together of evenings; he had come to think a good deal of Baard, who was a well-educated man, a deep thinker, but seemed to be afraid of what he knew. Arne helped him to get things right in his mind and told him much that he did not know before, and Baard was very grateful.

Eli could now sit up at intervals; and as she began to improve she took many fancies into her head. Thus it was that one evening as Arne sat in the room below Eli's chamber singing songs in a loud voice, the mother came down and brought word that Eli wanted to know if he would not come up-stairs and sing that she might hear the words. Arne had undoubtedly been singing for Eli all along; for when her

mother gave him the message he grew red, and rose as though he would deny what he had been doing, although no one had charged him with it. He soon recovered his composure, and said evasively that there was very little he could sing. But the mother remarked that it did not seem so when he was alone.

Arne yielded and went. He had not seen Eli since the day he had helped carry her upstairs; he felt that she must now be greatly changed, and was almost afraid to see her. But when he softly opened the door and entered, it was so dark in the room that he saw no one. He paused on the threshold.

"Who is it?" asked Eli, in a clear, low voice.

"It is Arne Kampen," he answered, in a guarded tone, that the words might fall softly.

"It was kind of you to come."

"How are you now, Eli?"

"Thank you, I am better."

"Please sit down, Arne," said she, presently, and Arne felt his way to a chair that stood by the foot of the bed. "It was so nice to hear you singing, you must sing a little for me up here."

"If I only knew anything that was suitable."

There was silence for a moment; then she

said, "Sing a hymn," and he did so; it was a part of one of the confirmation hymns. When he had finished, he heard that she was weeping, and so he dared not sing any more; but presently she said, "Sing another one like that," and he sang another, choosing the one usually sung when the candidates for confirmation are standing in the church aisle.

"How many things I have thought of while I have been lying here," said Eli. He did not know what to answer, and he heard her weeping quietly in the dark. A clock was ticking on the wall, it gave warning that it was about to strike, and then struck; Eli drew a long breath several times as though she would ease her breast, and then she said, "One knows so little. I have known neither father nor mother. I have not been kind to them, — and that is why it gives me such strange feelings to hear that confirmation hymn."

When people talk in the dark, they are always more truthful than when they see each other face to face; they can say more, too.

"It is good to hear your words," replied Arne; he was thinking of what she had said when she was taken ill.

She knew what he meant; and so she remarked, "Had not this happened to me, God

only knows how long it might have been before I had found my mother."

"She has been talking with you now?"

"Every day; she has done nothing else."

"Then, I dare say, you have heard many things."

"You may well say so."

"I suppose she talked about my father?"

"Yes."

"Does she still think of him?"

"She does."

"He was not kind to her."

"Poor mother!"

"He was worst of all, though, to himself."

Thoughts now arose that neither liked to express to the other. Eli was the first to break the silence.

"They say you are like your father."

"So I have heard," he answered, evasively.

She paid no heed to the tone of his voice; and so, after a while, she continued, "Could he, too, make songs?"

"No."

"Sing a song for me, — one you have made yourself."

But Arne was not in the habit of confessing that the songs he sang were his own. "I have none," said he.

"Indeed you have, and I am sure you will sing them for me if I ask it."

What he had never done for others, he now did for her. He sang the following song: —

"The tree's early leaf-buds were bursting their brown:
'Shall I take them away?' said the frost, sweeping down.
'No, dear; leave them alone
Till blossoms here have grown,'
Prayed the tree, while it trembled from rootlet to crown.

"The tree bore its blossoms, and all the birds sung:
'Shall I take them away?' said the wind, as it swung.
'No, dear; leave them alone
Till berries here have grown,'
Said the tree, while its leaflets all quivering hung.

"The tree bore its fruit in the midsummer glow:
Said the girl, 'May I gather thy berries or no?'
'Yes, dear, all thou canst see;
Take them; all are for thee,'
Said the tree, while it bent down its laden boughs low." [1]

This song almost took her breath away. He, too, sat there silent, after he was through, as though he had sung more than he cared to say to her.

Darkness has great power over those who are sitting in it and dare not speak; they are never so near each other as then. If Eli only turned, only moved her hand on the bed-cover, only breathed a little more heavily than usual, Arne heard it.

[1] Adapted to the metre of the original from the translation of Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.

"Arne, could not you teach me to make songs?"

"Have you never tried?"

"Yes, these last few days I have; but I have not succeeded."

"Why, what did you want to have in them?"

"Something about my mother, who cared so much for your father."

"That is a sad theme."

"I have cried over it, too."

"You must not think of what you are going to put in your songs; it comes of itself."

"How does it come?"

"As other precious things, when you least expect it."

They were both silent.

"I wonder, Arne, that you are longing to go away when you have so much that is beautiful within yourself."

"Do *you* know that I am longing?"

She made no reply to this, but lay still a few moments, as though in thought.

"Arne, you must not go away!" said she, and this sent a glow through him.

"Well, sometimes I have less desire to go."

"Your mother must be very fond of you. I should like to see your mother."

"Come over to Kampen when you are well."

And now all at once he pictured her sitting in the cheerful room at Kampen, looking out on the mountains; his chest began to heave, the blood rushed to his head. "It is warm in here," said he, getting up.

She heard this. "Are you going, Arne?" asked she, and he sat down again.

"You must come over to us often; mother likes you so much."

"I should be glad to come myself; but I must have some errand, though."

Eli was silent for a while, as if she were considering something. "I believe," said she, "that mother has something she wants to ask of you."

He heard her turn in bed. There was no sound to be heard, either in the room or outside, save the ticking of the clock on the wall. At last she burst out,—

"How I wish it were summer!"

"That it were summer?" and there rose up in his mind, blended with fragrant foliage and the tinkling of cattle bells, shouts from the mountains, singing from the valleys, Black Water glittering in the sunshine, the gards rocking in it, and Eli coming out and sitting down, as she had done that evening long ago.

"If it were summer," said she, "and I were sitting on the hill, I really believe I could sing a song."

He laughed and asked: "What would it be about?"

"Oh, something easy, about — I do not know myself —"

"Tell me, Eli!" and he sprang up in delight; then, recollecting himself, he sat down again.

"No; not for all the world!" She laughed.

"I sang for you when you asked me."

"Yes, you did; but — no! no!"

"Eli, do you think I would make sport of your little verse?"

"No; I do not think so, Arne; but it is not anything I have made myself."

"It is by some one else, then."

"Yes, it just came floating of itself."

"Then you can surely repeat it to me."

"No, no; it is not altogether that either, Arne. Do not ask me any more." She must have hid her face in the bedclothes, for the last words seemed to come out of them.

"You are not as kind to me now, Eli, as I was to you!" he said, and rose.

"Arne, there is a difference — you do not understand me — but it was — I do not know

myself — another time — do not be angry with me, Arne! Do not go away from me!" She began to weep.

"Eli, what is the matter?" He listened. "Are you feeling ill?" He did not think she was. She still wept; he thought that he must either go forward or backward.

"Eli!"

"Yes!"

They both spoke in whispers.

"Give me your hand!"

She did not answer; he listened intently, eagerly, felt about on the coverlid, and clasped a warm little hand that lay outside.

They heard steps on the stairs, and let go of each other's hands. It was Eli's mother, who was bringing in a light. "You are sitting quite too long in the dark," said she, and put the candlestick on the table. But neither Eli nor Arne could bear the light; she turned toward the pillow, he held his hand up before his eyes. "Oh, yes; it hurts the eyes a little at first," said her mother; "but that will soon pass off."

Arne searched on the floor for the cap he did not have with him, and then he left the room.

The next day he heard that Eli was coming down-stairs for a little while after dinner. He gathered together his tools, and said good-by. When she came down he was gone.

CHAPTER XIII.

Spring comes late in the mountains. The mail that passed along the highway during the winter three times a week, in April only passes once, and the inhabitants know then that in the outside world the snow is thawed, the ice broken; that the steamers are running, and the plow put into the earth. Here, the snow still lies three ells deep; the cattle low in the stalls, and the birds come, but hide themselves, shivering with the cold. Occasionally some traveler arrives, saying he has left his cart down in the valley, and he has flowers with him, which he shows,—he has gathered them by the wayside. Then the people become restless, go about talking together, look at the sky and down in the valley, wondering how much the sun gains each day. They strew ashes on the snow, and think of those who are now gathering flowers.

It was at such a time that old Margit Kampen came walking up to the parsonage and asked to speak with "father."[1] She was invited into

[1] The peasants call the priest father.

the study, where the priest, a slender, fair-haired, gentle-looking man with large eyes and spectacles, received her kindly, knew who she was, and asked her to sit down.

"Is it now something about Arne again?" he inquired, as though they had often talked together about him.

"Heaven help me!" said Margit; "it is never anything but good I have to say of him, and yet my heart is so heavy. She looked very sad as she spoke.

"Has that longing come back again?" asked the priest.

"Worse than ever," said the mother. "I do not even believe he will stay with me until spring comes to us here."

"And yet he has promised never to leave you."

"True enough; but, dear me, he must manage for himself now; when the mind is set upon going, go one must, I suppose. But what will become of me?"

"Still I will believe, as long as possible, that he will not leave you," said the priest.

"Certainly not; but what if he should never be content at home? I would then have it on my conscience that I stood in his way. There are times when I think I ought to ask him myself to go away."

"How do you know that he is longing now more than ever?"

"Oh, from many things. Since midwinter he has not worked out in the parish a single day. On the other hand, he has made three trips to town, and has stayed away a long while each time. He scarcely ever talks now when he is working, as he often used to do. He sits for hours by the little window up-stairs, and looks out over the mountains in the direction of the Kamp gorge; he sometimes stays there a whole Sunday afternoon, and often when it is moonlight, he sits there far into the night."

"Does he never read to you?"

"Of course he reads and sings to me every Sunday; but he always seems in a hurry, except now and then, when he overdoes it."

"Does he never come and talk with you?"

"He often lets so long a time pass without saying a word, that I cannot help crying when I sit alone. Then, I suppose, he sees this, for he begins to talk with me, but it is always about trifles, never about anything serious."

The priest was walking up and down; now he stopped and asked, "Why do you not speak with him about it?"

It was some time before she made any reply to this; she sighed several times, she looked

first downward, then on either side, — she folded the handkerchief she carried.

"I came here to-day to have a talk with father about something that lies heavily on my heart."

"Speak freely, it will lighten the burden."

"I know that; for I have now dragged it along alone these many years, and it grows heavier each year."

"What is it, my good woman?"

There was a brief pause; then she said, "I have sinned greatly against my son," — and she began to cry.

The priest came close up to her. "Confess it to me," said he, "then we will together pray God that you may be forgiven."

Margit sobbed and dried her eyes, but began to weep afresh as soon as she tried to speak, and this was repeated several times. The priest comforted her, and said she surely could not have been guilty of anything very sinful, that she was no doubt too strict with herself, and so on. Margit wept, however, and could not muster the courage to begin until the priest had seated himself by her side and spoken kindly words to her. Then, in broken sentences, she faltered forth her confession: —

"He had a hard time of it when he was a

boy, and so his mind became bent on travel. Then he met Kristian, he who has grown so very rich over there where they dig for gold. Kristian gave Arne so many books that he ceased to be like the rest of us; they sat together in the long evenings, and when Kristian went away, my boy longed to follow him. Just at that time, though, his father fell down dead, and Arne promised never to leave me. Yet I was like a hen that had brooded a duck's egg, when the young duckling had burst the shell, he wanted to go out on the great water, and I remained on the bank screaming. If he did not actually go away himself, his heart went in his songs, and every morning I thought I would find his bed empty.

"Then there came a letter for him from a far-off country, and I knew it must be from Kristian. God forgive me, I hid it! I thought that would be the end of the matter, but still another one came, and as I had kept the first from him, I had to keep the second one too But, indeed, it seemed as though they would burn a hole in the chest where they lay, for my thoughts would go there from the time I opened my eyes in the morning until I closed them at night. And you never have known anything so bad as this, for there came a third!

I stood holding it in my hand for a quarter of an hour; I carried it in my bosom for three days, weighing within me whether I should give it to him or lay it away with the others, but perhaps it would have power to lure the boy away from me, and I could not help it, I put the letter away with the others. Now I went about in sorrow every day, both because of those that were in the chest and because of the new ones that might come. I was afraid of every person who came to our house. When we were in the house together, and there came a knock at the door, I trembled, for it might be a letter, and then *he* would get it. When he was out in the parish, I kept thinking at home that now perhaps he would get a letter while he was away, and that it might have something in it about those that had come before. When he was coming home, I watched his face in the distance, and, dear me! how happy I was when I saw him smiling, for then I knew he had no letter! He had grown so handsome, too, just like his father, but much fairer and more gentle-looking. And then he had such a voice for singing: when he sat outside of the door at sunset, singing toward the mountain ridge and listening for the echo, I felt in my heart that I never could live without him! If I only saw

him, or if I knew he was anywhere around, and he looked tolerably happy, and would only give me a word now and then, I wished for nothing more on earth, and would not have had a single tear unshed.

"But just as he seemed to be getting on better, and to be feeling more at ease among people, there came word from the parish post-office that a fourth letter had now come, and that in it there were two hundred dollars! I thought I should drop right down on the spot where I stood. What should I do now? The letter, of course, I could get out of the way; but the money? I could not sleep for several nights on account of this money. I kept it up in the garret for a while, then left it in the cellar behind a barrel, and once I was so beside myself that I laid it in the window so that he might find it. When I heard him coming, I took it away again. At last I found a way, though I gave him the money and said it had been out at interest since mother's lifetime. He spent it in improving the gard, as had been in my own mind, and there it was not lost. But then it happened that same autumn that he sat one evening wondering why Kristian had so entirely forgotten him.

"Now the wound opened afresh, and the

money burned. What I had done was a sin, and the sin had been of no use to me!

"The mother who has sinned against her own child is the most unhappy of all mothers, — and yet I only did it out of love. So I shall be punished, I dare say, by losing what is dearest to me. For since midwinter he has taken up again the tune he sings when he is longing; he has sung it from boyhood up, and I never hear it without growing pale. Then I feel I could give up all for him, and now you shall see for yourself," — she took a scrap of paper out of her bosom, unfolded it, and gave it to the priest, — "here is something he is writing at from time to time; it certainly belongs to that song. I brought it with me, for I cannot read such fine writing; please see if there is anything in it about his going away."

There was only one stanza on this paper. For the second one there were half and whole lines here and there, as if it were a song he had forgotten, and was now calling to mind again, verse by verse. The first stanza ran, —

"Oh, how I wonder what I should see
Over the lofty mountains!
Snow here shuts out the view from me,
Round about stands the green pine-tree
Longing to hasten over —
Dare it become a rover?

"Is it about his going away?" asked Margit, her eyes fixed eagerly on the priest's face.

"Yes, it is," answered he, and let the paper drop.

"Was I not sure of it! Ah, me! I know that tune so well!" She looked at the priest, her hands folded, anxious, intent, while tear after tear trickled down her cheek.

But the priest knew as little how to advise as she. "The boy must be left to himself in this matter," said he. "Life cannot be altered for his sake, but it depends on himself whether he shall one day find out its meaning. Now it seems he wants to go away to do so."

"But was it not just so with the old woman?" said Margit.

"With the old woman?" repeated the priest.

"Yes; she who went out to fetch the sunshine into her house, instead of cutting windows in the walls."

The priest was astonished at her shrewdness; but it was not the first time she had surprised him when she was on this theme; for Margit, indeed, had not thought of anything else for seven or eight years.

"Do you think he will leave me? What shall I do? And the money? And the letters?" All this crowded upon her at once.

"Well, it was not right about the letters. You can hardly be justified in withholding from your son what belonged to him. It was still worse, however, to place a fellow Christian in a bad light when it was not deserved, and the worst of all was that it was one whom Arne loved and who was very fond of him in return. But we will pray God to forgive you, we will both pray."

Margit bowed her head; she still sat with her hands folded.

"How earnestly I would pray him for forgiveness, if I only knew he would stay!" She was probably confounding in her mind the Lord and Arne.

The priest pretended he had not noticed this. "Do you mean to confess this to him at once?" he asked.

She looked down and said in a low tone, "If I dared wait a little while I should like to do so."

The priest turned aside to hide a smile, as he asked, "Do you not think your sin becomes greater the longer you delay the confession?"

Both hands were busied with her handkerchief: she folded it into a very small square, and tried to get it into a still smaller one, but that was not possible.

"If I confess about the letters, I am afraid he will leave me."

"You dare not place your reliance on the Lord, then?"

"Why, to be sure I do!" she said hurriedly; then she added softly, "But what if he should go anyway?"

"So, then, you are more afraid of Arne's leaving you than of continuing in sin?"

Margit had unfolded her handkerchief again; she put it now to her eyes, for she was beginning to weep.

The priest watched her for a while, then he continued: "Why did you tell me all this when you did not mean it to lead to anything?" He waited a long time, but she did not answer. "You thought, perhaps, your sin would become less when you had confessed it?"

"I thought that it would," said she, softly, with her head bowed still farther down on her breast.

The priest smiled and got up. "Well, well, my dear Margit, you must act so that you will have joy in your old age."

"If I could only keep what I have!" said she; and the priest thought she dared not imagine any greater happiness than living in her con-

stant state of anxiety. He smiled as he lit his pipe.

"If we only had a little girl who could get hold of him, then you should see that he would stay!"

She looked up quickly, and her eyes followed the priest until he paused in front of her.

"Eli Böen? What" —

She colored and looked down again; but she made no reply.

The priest, who had stood still, waiting, said finally, but this time in quite a low tone "What if we should arrange it so that they should meet oftener at the parsonage?"

She glanced up at the priest to find out whether he was really in earnest. But she did not quite dare believe him.

The priest had begun to walk up and down again, but now he paused. "See here, Margit! When it comes to the point, perhaps this was your whole errand here to-day, hey?"

She bowed her head far down, she thrust two fingers into the folded handkerchief, and brought out a corner of it. "Well, yes, God help me; that was exactly what I wanted."

The priest burst out laughing, and rubbed his hands. "Perhaps that was what you wanted the last time you were here, too?"

She drew the corner of the handkerchief farther out; she stretched it and stretched it. "Since you ask me, yes, it was just that."

"Ha, ha, ha, ha! Ah, Margit! Margit! We shall see what we can do; for, to tell the truth, my wife and daughter have for a long time had the same thoughts as you."

"Is it possible?" She looked up, at once so happy and so bashful, that the priest had his own delight in her open, pretty face, in which the childlike expression had been preserved through all sorrow and anxiety.

"Ah, well, Margit, you, whose love is so great, will, I have no doubt, obtain forgiveness, for love's sake, both from your God and from your son, for the wrong you have done. You have probably been punished enough already in the continual, wearing anxiety you have lived in; we shall, if God is willing, bring this to a speedy end, for, if He *wishes* this, He will help us a little now."

She drew a long sigh, which she repeated again and again; then she arose, gave her thanks, dropped a courtesy, and courtesied again at the door. But she was scarcely well outside before a change came over her. She cast upward a look beaming with gratitude, and she hurried more and more the farther she

got away from people, and lightly as she tripped down toward Kampen that day, she had not done for many, many years. When she got so far on her way that she could see the thick smoke curling gayly up from the chimney, she blessed the house, the whole gard, the priest, and Arne, — and then remembered that they were going to have smoked beef for dinner, — her favorite dish!

CHAPTER XIV.

KAMPEN was a beautiful gard. It lay in the midst of a plain, bordered below by the Kamp gorge, and above by the parish road; on the opposite side of the road was a thick wood, a little farther beyond, a rising mountain ridge, and behind this the blue, snow-capped mountains. On the other side of the gorge there was also a broad mountain range, which first entirely surrounded Black Water on the side where Böen lay, then grew higher toward Kampen, but at the same time turned aside to make way for the broad basin called the lower parish, and which began just below, for Kampen was the last gard in the upper parish.

The front door of the dwelling-house was turned toward the road; it was probably about two thousand paces off; a path with leafy birch-trees on either side led thither. The wood lay on both sides of the clearing; the fields and meadows could, therefore, extend as far as the owners themselves wished; it was in all respects a most excellent gard. A little garden

lay in front of the house. Arne managed it as his books directed. To the left were the stables and other out-houses. They were nearly all new built, and formed a square opposite the dwelling-house. The latter was painted red, with white window-frames and doors, was two stories high, thatched with turf, and small shrubs grew on the roof; the one gable had a vane staff, on which turned an iron cock, with high, spread tail.

Spring had come to the mountain districts. It was a Sunday morning; there was a little heaviness in the air, but it was calm and without frost; mist hung over the wood, but Margit thought it would lift during the day. Arne had read the sermon for his mother and sung the hymns, which had done him good; now he was in full trim, ready to go up to the parsonage. He opened the door, the fresh perfume of the leaves was wafted toward him, the garden lay dew-covered and bowed by the morning mist, and from the Kamp gorge there came a roaring, mingled at intervals with mighty booms, making everything tremble to the ear and the eye.

Arne walked upward. The farther he got from the force the less awe-inspiring became its roar, which finally spread itself like the deep tones of an organ over the whole landscape.

"The Lord be with him on his way!" said the mother, opening the window and looking after him until the shrubbery closed about him. The fog lifted more and more, the sun cut through it; there was life now about the fields and in the garden; all Arne's work sprouted out in fresh growth, sending fragrance and joy up to the mother. Spring is lovely to those who long have been surrounded by winter.

Arne had no fixed errand at the parsonage, but still he wanted to learn about the papers he and the priest took together. Recently he had seen the names of several Norsemen who had done remarkably well digging gold in America, and among them was Kristian. Now Arne had heard a rumor that Kristian was expected home. He could, no doubt, get information about this at the parsonage, — and if Kristian had really returned, then Arne would go to him in the interval between spring and haying time. This was working in his mind until he had advanced so far that he could see Black Water, and Böen on the other side. The fog had lifted there, too; the sun was playing on the green, the mountain loomed up with shining peak, but the fog was still lying in its lap; the wood darkened the water on the right side, but in front of the house the ground was

more flat, and its white sand glittered in the sunshine. Suddenly his thoughts sped to the red-painted building with white doors and window-frames, that he had had in mind when he painted his own. He did not remember those first gloomy days he had passed there; he only thought of that bright summer they had both seen, he and Eli, up beside her sick-bed. Since then he had not been to Böen, nor would he go there, not for the whole world. If only his thoughts barely touched on it, he grew crimson and abashed; and yet this happened again every day, and many times a day. If there was anything which could drive him out of the parish, it was just this!

Onward he went, as though he would flee from his thoughts, but the farther he walked the nearer opposite Böen he came, and the more he gazed upon it. The fog was entirely gone, the sky clear from one mountain outline to the other, the birds sailed along and called aloud to one another in the glad sunny air, the fields responded with millions of flowers; the Kamp force did not here compel gladness to bow the knee in submission and awe, but buoyant and frolicsome it tumbled over, singing, twinkling rejoicing without end!

Arne had walked till he was in a glowing

heat; he flung himself down in the grass at the foot of a hill, looked over towards Böen, then turned away to avoid seeing it. Presently he heard singing above him, pure and clear, as song had never sounded to him before; it floated out over the meadow, mingled with the chattering of the birds, and he was scarcely sure of the tune before he recognized the words too, — for the tune was his favorite one, and the words were those that had been working in his mind from the time he was a boy, and forgotten the same day he had brought them forth! He sprang up as though he would catch them, then paused and listened; here came the first stanza, here came the second, here came the third and the fourth of his own forgotten song streaming down to him: —

"Oh, how I wonder what I should see
Over the lofty mountains!
Snow here shuts out the view from me,
Round about stands the green pine-tree,
Longing to hasten over —
Dare it become a rover?

"Soars the eagle with strong wing play,
Over the lofty mountains;
Rows through the young and vigorous day
Sating his courage in quest of prey;
When he will swooping downward,
Tow'rd far-off lands gazing onward.

"Leaf-heavy apple, wilt thou not go
Over the lofty mountains?
Forth putting buds 'mid summer's glow,
Thou wilt till next time wait, I know;
All of these birds art swinging,
Knowing not what they 're singing.

"He who for twenty years longed to flee
Over the lofty mountains,
Nor beyond them can hope to see,
Smaller each year feels himself to be;
Hears what the birds are singing,
Thou art with confidence swinging.

"Bird, with thy chatt'ring, what wouldst thou here
Over the lofty mountains?
Fairer the lands beyond must appear,
Higher the trees and the skies far more clear.
Wouldst thou but longing be bringing,
Bird, but no wings with thy singing?

"Shall I the journey never take
Over the lofty mountains?
Must my poor thoughts on this rock-wall break?
Must it a dread, ice-bound prison make,
Shutting at last in around me,
Till for my tomb it surround me?

"Forth will I! forth! Oh, far, far away,
Over the lofty mountains!
I will be crushed and consumed if I stay;
Courage tow'rs up and seeks the way,
Let it its flight now be taking,
Not on this rock-wall be breaking.

"One day I know I shall wander afar
Over the lofty mountains!
Lord, my God, is thy door ajar?

Good is thy home where the blessed are;
Keep it though closed a while longer,
Till my deep longing grow stronger." [1]

Arne stood still until the last verse, the last word, had died away. Again he heard the birds sporting and twittering, but he knew not whether he himself dared stir. Find out who had been singing, though, he must; he raised his foot and trod so carefully that he could not hear the grass rustle. A little butterfly alighted on a flower, directly at his feet, had to start up again, flew only a little piece farther, had to start up again, and so on all over the hill as he crept cautiously up. Soon he came to a leafy bush, and cared to go no farther, for now he could see. A bird flew up from the bush, gave a startled cry and darted over the sloping hill-side, and then she who was sitting within view looked up. Arne stooped far down, holding his breath, his heart throbbing so wildly that he heard its every beat, listening, not daring to move a leaf, for it was, indeed, she, — it was Eli whom he saw!

After a long, long while, he looked up just a little, and would gladly have drawn a step nearer · but he thought the bird might per-

[1] Auber Forestier's translation.

haps have its nest under the bush, and was afraid he would tread on it. He peered out between the leaves as they blew aside and closed together again. The sun shone directly on her. She wore a black dress without sleeves,[1] and had a boy's straw hat perched lightly on her head, and slanting a little to one side. In her lap lay a book, and on it a profusion of wild flowers; her right hand was dreamily toying with them; in her left, which rested on her knee, her head was bowed. She was gazing in the direction of the bird's flight, and it really seemed as though she had been weeping.

Anything more lovely Arne had neither seen nor dreamed of in his whole life; the sun, too, had scattered all its gold over her and the spot where she was sitting, and the song still floated about her, although its last notes had long since been sung, so that he thought, breathed — aye, even his heart beat in time to it.

She took up the book and opened it, but soon closed it again and sat as before, beginning to hum something else. It was, "The tree's early leaf-buds were bursting their brown." He knew it at once, although she did not quite remember either the words or the tune, and

[1] Peasants wear an under-garment high in the neck with long sleeves.

made many mistakes. The stanza she knew best was the last one, therefore she often repeated it; but she sang it thus: —

"The tree bore its berries, so mellow and red:
'May I gather thy berries?' a sweet maiden said.
'Yes, dear; all thou canst see;
Take them; all are for thee;'
Said the tree — trala-lala, trala, lala — said." [1]

Then suddenly she sprang up, scattering the flowers all around her, and sang aloud, so that the tune, as it quivered through the air, could easily be heard all the way over to Böen. And then she ran away. Should he call after her? No! There she went skipping over the hills, singing, trolling; her hat fell off, she picked it up again; and then she stood still in the midst of the tallest grass.

"Shall I call after her? She is looking round!"

He quickly stooped down. It was a long while before he dared peep forth again; at first he only raised his head; he could not see her: then he drew himself up on his knees, and still could not see her; finally, he got all the way up. No, she was gone!

He no longer wanted to go to the parsonage. He wanted nothing!

[1] Adapted to the original metre from the translation of Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Powers.

Later he sat where she had been sitting, still sat there until the sun drew near the meridian. The lake was not ruffled by a single ripple; the smoke from the gards began to curl upward; the land-rails, one after another, had ceased their call; the small birds, though, continued their sportive gambols, but withdrew to the wood; the dew was gone and the grass looked sober; not a breath of wind stirred the leaves; it was about an hour from noon. Arne scarcely knew how it was that he found himself seated there, weaving together a little song; a sweet melody offered itself for it, and into a heart curiously full of all that was gentle, the tune came and went until the picture was complete. He sang the song calmly as he had made it: —

"He went in the forest the whole day long,
The whole day long;
For there he had heard such a wonderful song,
A wonderful song.

"He fashioned a flute from a willow spray,
A willow spray,
To see if within it the sweet tune lay,
The sweet tune lay.

"It whispered and told him its name at last,
Its name at last;
But then, while he listened, away it passed,
Away it passed.

"But oft when he slumbered, again it stole,
Again it stole,

With touches of love upon his soul,
Upon his soul.

" Then he tried to catch it, and keep it fast,
And keep it fast;
But he woke, and away in the night it passed,
In the night it passed.

" ' My Lord, let me pass in the night, I pray,
In the night, I pray;
For the tune has taken my heart away,
My heart away.'

" Then answered the Lord, ' It is thy friend
It is thy friend,
Though not for an hour shall thy longing end,
Thy longing end;

" ' And all the others are nothing to thee,
Nothing to thee,
To this that thou seekest and never shalt see,
Never shalt see.' " [1]

[1] Translated by Augusta Plesner and S. Rugeley-Power.

CHAPTER XV.

It was a Sunday evening in midsummer the priest had returned from church, and Margit had been sitting with him until it was nearly seven o'clock. Now she took her leave, and hastened down the steps and out into the yard, for there she had just caught sight of Eli Böen, who had been playing for some time with the priest's son and her own brother.

"Good evening!" said Margit, standing still, "and God bless you all!"

"Good evening!" replied Eli, blushing crimson, and showing a desire to stop playing, although the boys urged her to continue; but she begged to be excused, and they had to let her go for that evening.

"It seems to me I ought to know you," said Margit.

"That is quite likely," was the reply.

'This surely never can be Eli Böen?"

Yes, it was she.

"Oh, dear me! So you are Eli Böen! Yes, now I see you are like your mother."

Eli's auburn hair had become unfastened, so that it floated carelessly about her; her face was as hot and as red as a berry, her bosom heaved, she could not speak, and laughed because she was so out of breath.

"Yes, that is the way with young people."

Margit looked at Eli with satisfaction as she spoke.

"I suppose you do not know me?"

Eli had no doubt wanted to ask who she was, but could not command the courage to do so, because the other was so much older than she; now she said that she did not remember having seen her before.

"Well, to be sure, that is scarcely to be expected; old folks seldom get out. You may perhaps know my son, Arne Kampen. I am his mother." She stole a sly glance, as she spoke, at Eli, on whom these words wrought a considerable change. "I am inclined to think he worked over at Böen once, did he not?"

Yes, it was Eli's impression, too, that he had done so.

"The weather is fine this evening. We turned our hay to-day, and got it in before I left home; it is really blessed weather."

"There will surely be a good hay-harvest this year," Eli observed.

"Yes, you may well say so. I suppose every thing looks splendidly over at Böen."

"They are through harvesting there."

"Oh, of course; plenty of help, stirring people. Are you going home this evening?"

No, she did not intend to do so. They talked together about one thing and another and gradually became so well acquainted that Margit felt at liberty to ask Eli to walk a short distance with her.

"Could you not keep me company a few steps?" said she. "I so seldom find any one to talk with, and I dare say it will make no difference to you."

Eli excused herself because she had not her jacket on.

"Well, I know, it is really a shame to ask such a thing the first time I meet a person; but then one has to bear with old folks."

Eli said she was quite willing to go, she only wanted to fetch her jacket.

It was a close-fitting jacket; when it was hooked, she looked as if she wore a complete dress; but now she only fastened the two lowest hooks, she was so warm. Her fine linen had a small turned down collar, and was fastened at the throat with a silver button, in the form of a bird with outspread wings. Such a one

tailor Nils had worn the first time Margit Kampen had danced with him.

"What a handsome button," she remarked, looking at it.

"My mother gave it to me," said Eli.

"Yes, so I thought," and Margit helped the girl adjust it as she spoke.

Now they walked on along the road. The new-mown hay was lying about in heaps. Margit took up a handful, smelled it, and thought it was good. She asked about the live stock at the parsonage, was led thereby to inquire about that at Böen, and then told how much they had at Kampen.

"The gard has prospered finely of late years, and it can be made as much larger as we ourselves wish. It feeds twelve milch cows now, and could feed more; but Arne reads a great many books, and manages according to them, and so he must have his cows fed in a first-rate way."

Eli made no reply to all this, as was quite natural; but Margit asked her how old she was. She was nineteen.

"Have you taken any part in the housework? You look so dainty, I suppose it has not been much."

Oh, yes, she had helped in various ways, especially of late.

"Well, it is a good thing to become accustomed to a little of everything; if one should get a large house of one's own, there might be many things to be done. But, to be sure, when one finds good help already in the house, it does not matter so very much."

Eli now thought she ought to turn back, for they had gone far beyond the parsonage lands.

"It will be some time yet before the sun sets; it would be kind if you would chat with me a little longer." And Eli went on.

Then Margit began to talk about Arne. "I do not know if you are very well acquainted with him. He can teach you something about everything. Bless me! how much that boy has read!"

Eli confessed that she was aware he had read a great deal.

"Oh, yes; that is really the least that can be said of him. Why, his conduct to his mother all his days is something far beyond that. If the old saying is true, that one who is good to his mother is sure to be good to his wife, the girl Arne chooses will not have very much to grumble about. What is it you are looking for, child?"

"I only lost a little twig I had in my hand."

They were both silent after this, and walked on without looking at each other.

"He has such strange ways," began the mother, presently; "he was so often frightened when he was a child that he got into the habit of thinking everything over to himself, and such folks never know how to put themselves forward."

Now Eli insisted on turning back, but Margit assured her that it was only a short distance now to Kampen, and see Kampen she must, as she was so near. But Eli thought it was too late that day.

"There is always some one who can go home with you," said Margit.

"No, no," promptly replied Eli, and was about to leave.

"To be sure, Arne is not at home," said Margit; "so it will not be he; but there will be sure to be some one else."

Now Eli had less objection to going; besides, she wanted very much to see Kampen. "If only it does not grow too late," said she.

"Well, if we stand here much longer talking about it, I suppose it may grow too late," and they went on.

"You have read a great deal, I dare say: you who were brought up at the priest's?"

Yes, Eli had read a good deal.

"That will be useful," Margit suggested, "when you are married to one who knows less than you."

Eli thought she would never be married to such a person.

"Ah, well, it would perhaps not be best either; but in this parish there is so little learning."

Eli asked where the smoke rising yonder in the wood came from.

"It comes from the new houseman's place belonging to Kampen. A man called Upland Knut lives there. He was alone in the world, and so Arne gave him that place to clear. He knows what it is to be lonely, my poor Arne."

Soon they reached an ascent whence the gard could be seen. The sun shone full in their faces; they held up their hands to shade their eyes and gazed down at Kampen. It lay in the midst of a plain, the houses red painted and with white window-frames; the grass in the surrounding meadows had been mown, the hay might still be seen in heaps here and there, the grain-fields lay green and rich among the pale meadows; over by the cow-house all was stir and bustle: the cows, sheep, and goats were just coming home, their bells were tinkling

the dogs were barking, the milk-maids shouting, while above all rose with awful din the roar of the force in the Kamp gorge. The longer Eli looked, the more completely this grand tune filled her ears, and at last it seemed so appalling to her that her heart throbbed wildly; it roared and thundered through her head until she grew bewildered, and at the same time felt so warm and tender that involuntarily she took such short, hesitating steps, that Margit begged her to walk a little faster.

She started. "I never heard anything like that waterfall," said she; "I am almost afraid of it."

"You will soon get used to it," said the mother; "at last you would even miss it if you could not hear it."

"Dear me! do you think so?" cried Eli.

"Well, you will see," said Margit, smiling.

"Come now, let us first look at the cattle," she continued, turning off from the main road. "These trees on each side Nils planted He wanted to have everything nice, Nils did, that is what Arne likes too; look! there you can see the garden my boy has laid out."

"Oh, how pretty!" cried Eli, running over to the garden fence. She had often seen Kam

pen, but only from a distance, where the garden was not visible.

"We will look at that after a while," said Margit.

Eli hastily glanced through the windows, as she went past the house; there was no one inside.

They stationed themselves on the barn-bridge and watched the cows as they passed lowing into the stable. Margit named them to Eli, told how much milk each one gave, and which of them calved in the summer, which did not. The sheep were counted and let into the fold; they were of a large, foreign breed; Arne had raised them from two lambs he got from the south. "He gives much attention to all such things, although you would not think it of him."

They now went into the barn, and examined the hay that had been housed, and Eli had to smell it — "for such hay is not to be found everywhere." Margit pointed through the barn-hatch over the fields, and told what each one yielded and how much was sown of each kind of seed.

They went out toward the house; but Eli, who had not spoken a word in reply to all that had been said, as they passed by the gar-

den, asked if she might go into it. And when leave had been given her to go, she begged to be allowed to pluck a flower or two. There was a little bench away in one corner; she went and sat down on it, only to try it, apparently, for she rose at once.

"We must hurry now, if we would not be too late," said Margit, standing in the door. And now they went in. Margit asked Eli if she should offer her some refreshments on this her first visit; but Eli blushed and hastily declined. Then the girl's eyes wandered all around the room they had entered; it was where the family sat in the day-time, and the windows opened on the road; the room was not large but it was cozy, and there was a clock and a stove in it. On the wall hung Nils's fiddle, dingy and old, but with new strings. Near it also hung a couple of guns belonging to Arne, an English angling-rod and other rare things which the mother took down and showed to Eli, who looked at them and handled them. The room was without paint, for Arne disliked it; nor was there any painting in the room looking toward the Kamp gorge, with the fresh green mountains directly opposite and the blue ones in the background; this latter room, — which was in the new part

of the building, as was the entire half of the house it was in, — was larger and prettier than the first. The two smaller rooms in the wing were painted, for there the mother was to live when she was old, and Arne had brought a wife into the house. They went into the kitchen, the store-house, the bake-house, Eli spoke not a single word; indeed, she viewed everything about her as though from afar off; only when anything was held out for her inspection she touched it, but very daintily. Margit, who had kept up an unbroken stream of chatter the whole way, now led her into the passage again; they must go and take a look up-stairs.

There also were well-arranged rooms, corresponding with those below; but they were new and had scarcely yet been occupied, except one, which looked toward the gorge. In these rooms were kept all sorts of articles which were not in daily household use. Here hung a whole lot of robes, together with other bedclothes; the mother took hold of them, lifted them up, and now and then insisted on having Eli do the same. Meanwhile, it actually seemed as though the young girl were gaining a little courage, or else her pleasure in these things increased; for to some of them she went back a

second time, asked questions about them, and became more and more interested.

Finally the mother said, "Now at last we will go into Arne's own room;" and then they went into the room overlooking the Kamp gorge. Once more the awful din of the force smote upon their ears, for the window was open. They were up so high that they could see the spray rising between the mountains, but not the force itself, save in one spot farther on, where a fragment had fallen from the cliff, just where the torrent, with all its might, took its final leap into the depths below. Fresh turf covered the upward turned side of this fallen piece of rock, a few fir cones had buried themselves in it, and sent forth a growth of trees with their roots in the crevices. The wind had tugged at and shaken the trees, the force had washed them so completely that there was not a branch four ells from the roots; they were crooked in the knees, their boughs knotted and gnarled, yet they kept their footing, and shot far up between the rocky walls. This was the first thing Eli noticed from the window; the next, the dazzling white snow-capped peaks rising above the green mountains She turned her eyes away, let them wander over the peaceful, fruitful fields, and finally

about the room where she stood; the roar of the force had hitherto prevented this.

How calm and cheerful it was within, compared with the scene without. She did not look at any single article, because one blended into the other, and most of them were new to her, for Arne had centred his affections in this room, and, simple as it was, it was artistic in almost every particular. It seemed as though the sound of his songs came floating toward her, while she stood there, or as though he himself smiled at her from every object. The first thing her eyes singled out in the room, was a broad, handsomely carved book-shelf. There were so many books on it that she did not believe the priest had more. A pretty cabinet was the next thing she noticed. Here he kept many rare things, his mother said. Here, too, he had his money, she added, in a whisper. They had twice had property left to them, she told afterwards; they would have one more inheritance besides, if things went as they should. "But money is not the best thing in the world, after all. Arne may get what is far better."

There were many little trinkets in the room which were interesting to examine, and Eli looked at them all, as happy as a child.

Margit patted her on the shoulder, saying, as

she looked brightly into her eyes, "I have never seen you before to-day, my child, but I am already very fond of you." Before Eli had time to feel embarrassed, Margit pulled at her dress, and said, quite softly, "You see that little red chest; there is something nice in that, I can tell you."

Eli looked at the chest: it was a small, square one, which she at once longed to call her own.

"Arne does not want me to know what is in that chest," whispered the mother, "and he always keeps the key hid." She walked up to some clothes hanging on the wall, took down a velvet waistcoat, felt in the watch-pocket, and there found the key. "Come, now, you shall see," she whispered.

Eli did not think the mother was doing quite right, but women are women, — and these two now crossed softly over to the chest and knelt in front of it. As the mother raised the lid, so pleasant a perfume rose toward them that Eli clapped her hands even before she had seen anything. Spread over the top was a kerchief which the mother took away. "Now you shall see," she whispered, as she took up a fine, black silk neckerchief, such a one as men do not wear. "It looks just as if it were for a girl," said the mother. "Here is another," she added.

Eli could not help taking hold of this; but when the mother insisted upon trying it on her, she declined, and hung her head. The mother carefully folded them up again.

"See!" she then said, taking up some pretty silk ribbons; "everything here looks as if it were meant for a girl."

Eli grew red as fire, but not a sound escaped her; her bosom heaved, her eyes had a shy look, otherwise she stood immovable.

"Here are more things still!" The mother took hold of a beautiful black dress pattern, as she spoke. "This is fine goods, I dare say," said she, as she held it up to the light.

Eli's hands trembled, when the mother asked her to take hold of the cloth, she felt the blood rushing to her head; she would gladly have turned away, but this was not easy to do.

"He has bought something every time he has been to town," said the mother.

Eli could scarcely control herself any longer; her eyes roamed about the chest from one article to another, and back again to the dress goods; she, in fact, saw nothing else. But the mother persisted, and the last thing she took up was wrapped in paper; they slowly unwrapped it; this became attractive again. Eli grew eager; it proved to be a pair of small

shoes. They had never seen anything like these, either one of them; the mother wondered how they could be made. Eli said nothing, but when she went to touch the shoes, all her fingers made marks on them; she felt so ashamed that she came very near bursting into tears. She longed most of all to take her leave, but she dared not speak, nor dare she do anything to make the mother look up.

Margit was wholly occupied with her own thoughts. "Does it not look just as if he had bought them one by one for some one he had not the courage to give them to?" said she, as she put each article back in the place where she had found it; she must have had practice in so doing. "Now let us see what there is in this little box," she added, softly opening it, as though now they were going to find something really choice.

There lay a buckle, broad enough for a belt; that was the first thing she showed Eli; the next was two gold rings, tied together, and then the girl caught sight of a velvet hymn-book with silver clasps; further she could not look, for on the silver of the book was engraved, in small letters, "Eli, Baardsdatter Böen."[1]

Margit called her attention to something, got

[1] The Norse word *datter* means daughter.

no reply, but saw that tear after tear was trickling down on the silk kerchief, and spreading over it. Then the mother laid down the brooch she held in her hand, closed the little box, turned round and clasped Eli in her arms. The daughter wept on her shoulder, and the mother wept over her, but neither of them spoke a word.

A little while later, Eli was walking alone in the garden ; the mother had gone into the kitchen to prepare something good for supper, for now Arne would soon be home. By and by, Margit came out into the garden to look for her young friend, and found her sitting writing in the sand. As the mother joined her, Eli quickly smoothed the sand over what she had written, — looked up and smiled ; she had been weeping.

" There is nothing to cry about, my child," said Margit, and gave her a pat.

They saw a black object moving between the bushes on the road. Eli stole into the house. the mother followed her. Here a bounteous repast was awaiting them : cream pudding, smoked meat, and cakes; but Eli had no eyes for these things ; she crossed the floor to the corner where the clock stood, sat down on a

chair close to the wall, and trembled if she only heard a cat stir. The mother stood by the table. Firm steps were heard on the flagstones, a short, light step in the passage, the door was gently opened, and Arne came in.

The first object his eyes lighted on was Eli in the clock corner; he let go of the door and stood still. This made Eli yet more embarrassed; she got up, regretted at once having done so, and turned towards the wall.

"Are *you* here?" said Arne, softly, blushing crimson.

Eli shaded her eyes with one hand, as one does when the sun shines too full in the face.

"How —?" He could get no farther, but he advanced a step or two.

She put her hand down again, turned toward him, then, bowing her head, she burst into tears.

"God bless you, Eli!" said he, and drew his arm around her; she nestled close up to him. He whispered something in her ear; she made no reply, but clasped her hands about his neck.

They stood thus for a long time, and not a sound was heard save the roar of the force, sending forth its eternal song. By and by some one was heard weeping near the table Arne looked up: it was the mother.

"Now I am sure you will not leave me, Arne," said she, approaching him. She wept freely, but it did her good, she said.

When Arne and Eli walked home together in the bright summer evening, they did not talk much about their new-born happiness. They let Nature herself take the lead in the conversation, — so quiet, bright, and grand, she seemed, as she accompanied them. But it was on his way back to Kampen from this their first summer-night's walk, with his face turned toward the rising sun, that he laid the foundations of a poem, which he was then in no frame of mind to construct, but which, later, when it was finished, became for a while his daily song. It ran thus: —

"I hoped to become something great one day;
I thought it would be when I got away.
Each thought that my bosom entered
On far-off journeys was centred.
A maiden then into my eyes did look;
My rovings soon lost their pleasure.
The loftiest aim my heart can brook
Is her to proclaim my treasure.

"I hoped to become something great one day;
I thought it would be when I got away.
To meet with the great in learning
Intensely my heart was yearning.
She taught me, she did, for she spoke a word:
'The best gift of God's bestowing

Is not to be called a distinguished lord,
But ever a *man* to be growing.

"I hoped to become something great one day;
I thought it would be when I got away.
My home seemed so cold, neglected,
I felt like a stranger suspected.
When her I discovered, then love I did see
In every glance that found me;
Wherever I turned friends waited for me,
And life became new around me."

There came afterwards many a summer evening walk, followed by many a song. One of these must be recorded: —

"The cause of this all is beyond my knowing;
No storm there has been and no floods have been flowing.
A sparkling and glittering brook, it would seem,
Has poured itself into the broader stream
Which constantly growing seeks the ocean.

"There is something we can from our lives not sever;
In need it is near and forsakes us never, —
A power that draws, a loving breast,
Which sadness, shyness, and all unrest
Can gather in peace in a bridal present.

"Could I but by spirits through life be attended,
As pure as the thought which has now me befriended!
The ordering spirit of God it was.
He ruleth the world with sacred laws.
Toward goodness eternal I am progressing."

But perhaps none of them better expressed his fervent gratitude than the following: —

"The power that gave me my little song
Has caused that as rain has been my sadness
And that as sunshine has been my gladness,
The spring-time wants of my soul along.
Whate'er betided
It did no harm;
My song all guided
To love so warm.

"The power that gave me my little song
Has given me friendship for all that 's yearning
For freedom's blessings my blood is burning;
The foe I am of every wrong.
I sought my station,
Spite every storm,
And found salvation
In love so warm.

"The power that gave me my little song
Must make me able to sing the others,
And now and then to make glad my brothers
Whom I may meet in the worldly throng,—
For there was never
A sweeter charm
Than singing ever
In love so warm."

CHAPTER XVI.

It was late in the autumn; the harvesters were at work housing the grain. The day was clear, it had rained during the night; and in the morning, therefore, the air was as mild as in summer-time. It was a Saturday, and yet many boats were making their way across Black Water toward the church; the men, in their shirt sleeves, were rowing; the women sat in the stern, with light-colored kerchiefs on their heads. A still greater number of boats were steering over to Böen, in order to move away from there later in grand procession, for on this day Baard Böen gave a wedding for his daughter Eli and Arne Nils' son Kampen.

All the doors were open; people were going in and out; children, with pieces of cake in their hands, stood about the yard, afraid of their new clothes, and looking shyly at one another; an old woman sat upon the storehouse steps alone, — it was Margit Kampen. She wore a large silver ring, with several small rings fastened to the upper silver plate; now

and then she looked at it; Nils had given it to her the day of their wedding and she had never worn it since.

The man who presided at the feast, and the two young groomsmen, the priest's son and Eli's brother, went about in the two or three rooms, offering refreshments to the wedding guests as they arrived to be present on this great occasion. Up-stairs in Eli's room were the bride, the priest's wife, and Mathilde, — the last-named had come from town for the sole purpose of decking the bride; this the girls had promised each other from their childhood. Arne — wearing a broadcloth suit, with close-fitting roundabout and with a collar that Eli had made — stood in one of the down-stairs rooms by the window on which Eli had written "Arne."

Outside in the passage two persons met as they came each from some duty of the day. One of them was on his way from the landing-place, where he had been helping to put the church boats in order; he wore a black broadcloth roundabout, with blue wadmal trousers, whose dye rubbed off, so that his hands were blue; his white collar looked well with his fair face and long light hair; his high forehead was calm; about the mouth played a smile. It was

Baard. She whom he met in the passage was just coming from the kitchen. She was dressed for church, was tall and slender, and walked with a firm though hurried step through the door. When she met Baard she paused, and her mouth drew up to one side. It was Birgit, his wife. Each had something to say, but it only found expression through both standing still. Baard was the most embarrassed of the two; he smiled more and more, but it was his embarrassment that came to his aid, forcing him to start up-stairs without further delay. "Perhaps you will come too," he said, as he passed, and Birgit followed him. Up-stairs in the garret they were entirely alone; yet Baard locked the door after them, and he was a long time about it. When finally he turned, Birgit stood by the window gazing out; it was in order to avoid looking into the room. Baard brought forth a small flask from his breast pocket and a little silver cup. He wanted to pour out some wine for his wife, but she would not have any, although he assured her that it was wine that had been sent from the parsonage. Then he drank himself, but paused several times to offer the cup to her. He corked the flask, put both it and the cup away in his breast-pocket again, and sat down on a chest.

It very evidently pained him that his wife would not drink with him.

He breathed heavily several times. Birgit stood leaning with one hand against the window frame. Baard had something to say, but now it seemed even harder to speak than before.

"Birgit!" said he, "I dare say you are thinking of the same to-day that I am."

Then he heard her move from one side of the window to the other, and again she leaned her head on her arm.

"Oh, yes; you know who I mean. He it was who parted us two. I thought it would not go beyond the wedding, but it has lasted much longer."

He heard her sigh, he saw her again change her place; but he did not see her face. He himself was struggling so hard that he had to wipe his face with his jacket sleeve. After a long conflict he began again: "To-day a son of his, well-educated and handsome, becomes one of us, and to him we have given our only daughter. Now, how would it be, Birgit, if we two were to have our wedding to-day?"

His voice trembled, and he cleared his throat. Birgit, who had raised her head, now leaned it on her arm again, but said nothing. Baard

waited for some time; he heard her breathe, but he got no answer, — and he had nothing further to say himself either. He looked up and grew very pale; for she did not even turn her head. Then he rose.

At the same moment there was a gentle knock at the door, and a soft voice asked, "Are you coming, mother?" It was Eli. There was something in the tone that made Baard involuntarily pause and glance at Birgit. Birgit also raised her head; she looked towards the door, and her eyes fell on Baard's pale face. "Are you coming, mother?" was once more asked from without.

"Yes, I am coming now!" said Birgit, in a broken voice, as she firmly crossed the floor to where Baard stood, gave him her hand, and burst into the most passionate weeping. The two hands met, they were both toil-worn now, but they clasped as firmly as though they had been seeking each other for twenty years. They still clung together as they went toward the door, and when a while later the bridal procession was passing down to the landing-place, and Arne gave his hand to Eli to take the lead, Baard, seeing it, took his wife by the hand, contrary to all custom, and followed them, smiling contentedly.

Behind them, Margit Kampen walked alone, as was her wont.

Baard was in high spirits that day; he sat talking with the rowers. One of these who kept looking up at the mountains remarked, that it was strange that even such a steep rock could be clad.

"It must, whether it would or no," said Baard, and his eyes wandered all along the procession until they rested on the bridal pair and his wife. "Who could have foretold this twenty years ago?" said he.

EARLY TALES AND SKETCHES.

THE RAILROAD AND THE CHURCHYARD.

CHAPTER I.

KNUD AAKRE belonged to an old family in the parish, where it had always been renowned for its intelligence and its devotion to the public welfare. His father had worked his way up to the priesthood, but had died early, and as the widow came from a peasant stock, the children were brought up as peasants. Knud had, therefore, received only the education afforded by the public schools of his day; but his father's library had early inspired him with a love of knowledge. This was further stimulated by his friend Henrik Wergeland, who frequently visited him, sent him books, seeds, and much valuable counsel. Following some of the latter, Knud early founded a club, which in the beginning had a very miscellaneous object, for instance: "to give the members prac-

tice in debating and to study the constitution," but which later was turned into a practical agricultural society for the entire bailiwick. According to Wergeland's advice, he also founded a parish library, giving his father's books as its first endowment. A suggestion from the same quarter led him to start a Sunday-school on his gard, for those who might wish to learn writing, arithmetic, and history. All this drew attention to him, so that he was elected member of the parish board of supervisors, of which he soon became chairman. In this capacity, he took a deep interest in the schools, which he brought into a remarkably good condition.

Knud Aakre was a short man, brisk in his movements, with small, restless eyes and very disorderly hair. He had large lips, which were in constant motion, and a row of splendid teeth which always seemed to be working with them, for they glistened while his words were snapped out, crisp and clear, crackling like sparks from a great fire.

Foremost among the many he had helped to gain an education was his neighbor Lars Högstad. Lars was not much younger than Knud, but he had developed more slowly. Knud liked to talk about what he read and thought,

and he found in Lars, whose manner was quiet and grave, a good listener, who by degrees grew to be a man of excellent judgment. The relations between them soon became such that Knud was never willing to take any important step without first consulting Lars Högstad, and the matter on hand was thus likely to gain some practical amendment. So Knud drew his neighbor into the board of supervisors, and gradually into everything in which he himself took part. They always drove together to the meetings of the board, where Lars never spoke; but on the way back and forth Knud learned his opinions. The two were looked upon as inseparable.

One fine autumn day the board of supervisors convened to consider, among other things, a proposal from the bailiff to sell the parish grain magazine and with the proceeds establish a small savings-bank. Knud Aakre, the chairman, would undoubtedly have approved this measure had he relied on his unbiased judgment. But he was prejudiced, partly because the proposal came from the bailiff, whom Wergeland did not like, and who was consequently no favorite of Knud's either, and partly because the grain magazine had been built by his

influential paternal grandfather and by him presented to the parish. Indeed, Knud was rather inclined to view the proposition as a personal insult, therefore he had not spoken of it to any one, not even to Lars, and the latter never entered on a topic that had not first been set afloat by some one else.

As chairman, Knud Aakre read the proposal without adding any comments; but, as was his wont, his eyes sought Lars, who usually sat or stood a little aside, holding a straw between his teeth, — he always had one when he took part in a conversation; he either used it as a tooth-pick, or he let it hang loosely in one corner of his mouth, turning it more rapidly or more slowly, according to the mood he was in. To his surprise Knud saw that the straw was moving very fast.

"Do you think we should agree to this?" he asked, quickly.

Lars answered, dryly, —

"Yes, I do."

The whole board, feeling that Knud held quite a different opinion, looked in astonishment at Lars, but the latter said no more, nor was he further questioned. Knud turned to another matter, as though nothing had transpired. Not until the close of the meeting did he resume the

subject, and then asked, with apparent indifference, if it would not be well to send the proposal back to the bailiff for further consideration, as it certainly did not meet the views of the people, for the parish valued the grain magazine. No one replied. Knud asked whether he should enter the resolution in the register, the measure did not seem to be a wise one.

"Against one vote," added Lars.

"Against two," cried another, promptly.

"Against three," came from a third; and before the chairman could realize what was taking place, a majority had voted in favor of the proposal.

Knud was so surprised that he forgot to offer any opposition. He recorded the proceedings and read, in a low voice: "The measure is recommended, — adjourned."

His face was fiery red as he rose and put up the minute-book; but he determined to bring forward the question once more at the meeting of the representatives. Out in the yard, he put his horse to the wagon, and Lars came and took his seat at his side. They discussed various topics on their way home, but not the one they had nearest at heart.

The next day Knud's wife sought Lars's wife to inquire if there was anything wrong between

the two men, for Knud had acted so strangely when he came home. A short distance above the gard buildings she met Lars's wife, who was on her way to ask the same question, for her husband, too, had been out of sorts the day before. Lars's wife was a quiet, bashful person, somewhat cowed, not by harsh words, but by silence, for Lars never spoke to her unless she had done something amiss, or he feared that she might do wrong. Knud Aakre's wife, on the other hand, talked more with her husband, and particularly about the board, for lately it had taken his thoughts, work, and affection away from her and the children. She was as jealous of it as of a woman ; she wept at night over the board and quarreled with her husband about it during the day. But for that very reason she could say nothing about it now when for once he had returned home unhappy ; for she immediately became more wretched than he, and for her life she could not rest until she had discovered what was the matter. Consequently, when Lars's wife could not give her the desired information, she had to go out in the parish to seek it. Here she obtained it, and of course was at once of her husband's opinion ; she found Lars incomprehensible, not to say wicked When, however, she let her husband perceive

this, she felt that as yet there was no breach between Lars and him; that, on the contrary, he clung warmly to him.

The representatives met. Lars Högstad drove over to Aakre in the morning; Knud came out of the house and took his seat beside him. They exchanged the usual greetings, spoke perhaps rather less than was their wont on the way, and not of the proposal. All the members of the board were present; some, too, had found their way in as spectators, which Knud did not like, for it showed that there was a stir in town about the matter. Lars was armed with his straw, and he stood by the stove warming himself, for the autumn was beginning to be cold. The chairman read the proposal, in a subdued, cautious manner, remarking when he was through, that it must be remembered this came from the bailiff, who was not apt to be very felicitous in his propositions. The building, it was well known, was a gift, and it is not customary to part with gifts, least of all when there is no need of doing so.

Lars, who never before had spoken at the meetings, now took the floor, to the astonishment of all. His voice trembled, but whether it did so out of regard for Knud, or from anxiety lest his own cause should be lost, shall remain

unsaid. But his arguments were good and clear, and full of a logic and confidence which had scarcely been heard at these meetings before. And when he had gone over all the ground, he added, in conclusion : —

" What does it matter if the proposal does come from the bailiff? This affects the question as little as who erected the building, or in what way it came into the public possession."

Knud Aakre had grown very red in the face (he blushed easily), and he shifted uneasily from side to side, as was his wont when he was impatient, but none the less did he exert himself to be circumspect and to speak in a low voice. There were savings-banks enough in the country, he thought, and quite near at hand, he might almost say *too* near. But if, after all, it was deemed expedient to have one, there were surely other ways of reaching it than those leading over the gifts of the dead and the love of the living. His voice was a little unsteady when he said this, but quickly recovered as he proceeded to speak of the grain magazine in itself, and to show what its advantages were.

Lars answered him thoroughly on the last point, and then added, —

" However, one thing and another lead me to doubt whether this parish is managed for the

ake of the living or the dead; furthermore, whether it is the love and hatred of a single family which controls matters here, or the good of the whole."

Knud answered quickly, —

"I do not know whether he who has just spoken has been least benefited by this family, — both by the dead and by him who now lives."

The first shot was aimed at the fact that Knud's powerful grandfather had saved the gard for Lars's paternal grandfather, when the latter, on his part, was absent on a little excursion to the penitentiary.

The straw which long had been in brisk motion, suddenly became still.

"It is not my way to keep talking everywhere about myself and my family," said Lars, then turned again with calm superiority to the subject under discussion, briefly reviewing all the points with one definite object. Knud had to admit to himself that he had never viewed the matter from such a broad standpoint; involuntarily he raised his eyes and looked at Lars, who stood before him, tall, heavily built, with clearness on the vigorous brow and in the deep eyes. The lips were tightly compressed, the straw still played in the corner of his

mouth; all the surrounding lines indicated vigor. He kept his hands behind him, and stood rigidly erect, while his voice was as deep and as hollow as if it proceeded from the depths of the earth. For the first time in his life Knud saw him as he was, and in his inmost soul he was afraid of him; for this man must always have been his superior. He had taken all Knud himself knew and could impart; he had rejected the tares and retained what had produced this strong, hidden growth.

He had been fostered and loved by Knud, but had now become a giant who hated Knud deeply, terribly. Knud could not explain to himself why, but as he looked at Lars he instinctively felt this to be so, and all else becoming swallowed up in this thought he started up, exclaiming, —

"But Lars! Lars! what in Heaven's name is the matter with you?" His agitation overcame him, — "you, whom I have — you who have" —

Powerless to utter another word, he sat down; but in his effort to gain the mastery over the emotion he deemed Lars unworthy of seeing, he brought his fist down with violence on the table, while his eyes flashed beneath his stiff, disorderly hair, which always hung over

them. Lars acted as if he had not been interrupted, and turning toward the others he asked if this was to be the decisive blow; for if such were the case there was no need for further remarks.

This calmness was more than Knud could endure.

"What is it that has come among us?" cried he. "We who have, until to-day, been actuated by love and zeal alone, are now stirred up against each other, as though goaded on by some evil spirit," and he cast a fiery glance at Lars, who replied, —

"It must be you yourself who bring in this spirit, Knud; for I have kept strictly to the matter before us. But you never can see the advantage of anything you do not want yourself; now we shall learn what becomes of the love and the zeal when once this matter is decided as we wish."

"Have I then illy served the interests of the parish?"

There was no reply. This grieved Knud, and he continued, —

"I really did persuade myself that I had accomplished various things — various things which have been of advantage to the parish; but perhaps I have deceived myself."

He was again overcome by his feelings; for his was a fiery nature, ever variable in its moods, and the breach with Lars pained him so deeply that he could scarcely control himself. Lars answered, —

"Yes, I know you appropriate the credit for all that is done here, and if one should judge by the amount of speaking at these meetings, you certainly have accomplished the most."

"Is that the way of it?" shouted Knud, looking sharply at Lars. "It is you who deserve the entire honor?"

"Since we must finally talk about ourselves," said Lars, "I am free to admit that every question has been carefully considered by both of us before it was introduced here."

Here little Knud Aakre regained his ready speech: —

"Take the honor, in God's name; I am quite able to live without it; there are other things that are harder to lose!"

Involuntarily Lars evaded his gaze, but said, as he set the straw in very rapid motion, —

"If I were to express *my* opinion, I should say that there is not very much to take credit for. No doubt the priest and the school-masters are content with what has been done; but certainly the common people say that up to the

present time the taxes of this parish have grown heavier and heavier."

Here arose a murmur in the crowd, and the people grew very restless. Lars continued, —

"Finally, to-day we have a matter brought before us that might make the parish some little amends for all it has paid out; this is perhaps the reason why it encounters such opposition. This is a question which concerns the parish; it is for the welfare of all; it is our duty to protect it from becoming a mere family matter."

People exchanged glances, and spoke in half-audible tones; one of them remarked, as he rose to go for his dinner-pail, that these were the truest words he had heard in these meetings for many years. Now all rose from their seats, the conversation became general, and Knud Aakre, who alone remained sitting, felt that all was lost, fearfully lost, and made no further effort to save it. The truth was, he possessed something of the temperament attributed to Frenchmen: he was very good at a first, second, or even third attack, but poor at self-defense, for his sensibilities overwhelmed his thoughts.

He was unable to comprehend this, nor could he sit still any longer, and so resigning his

place to the vice-chairman, he left. The others could not refrain from a smile.

He had come to the meeting in company with Lars, but went home alone, although the way was long. It was a cold autumn day, the forest was jagged and bare, the meadow gray-yellow, frost was beginning here and there to remain on the road-side. Disappointment is a terrible companion. Knud felt so small, so desolate, as he walked along; but Lars appeared everywhere before him, towering up to the sky, in the dusk of the evening, like a giant. It vexed him to think it was his own fault that this had been the decisive battle; he had staked too much on one single little issue. But surprise, pain, anger, had mastered him; they still burned, tingled, moaned, and stormed within him. He heard the rumbling of cart-wheels behind him; it was Lars driving his superb horse past him, in a brisk trot, making the hard road resound like distant thunder. Knud watched the broad-shouldered form that sat erect in the cart, while the horse, eager for home, sped onward, without any effort on the part of Lars, who merely gave him a loose rein. It was but a picture of this man's power: he was driving onward to the goal! Knud felt himself cast out of his cart, to stagger on alone in the chill autumn air.

In his home at Aakre Knud's wife was wait-ing for him. She knew that a battle was inevitble; she had never in her life trusted Lars, and now she was positively afraid of him. It had been no comfort to her that he and her husband had driven away together; it would not have consoled her had they returned in the same way. But darkness had fallen and they had not come. She stood in the doorway, gazing out on the road in front of the house; she walked down the hill and back again, but no cart appeared.

Finally she hears a rattling on the hard road, her heart throbs as the wheels go round, she clings to the casement, peering out into the night; the cart draws near; only one is in it; she recognizes Lars, who sees and recognizes her, but drives past without stopping. Now she became thoroughly alarmed. Her limbs gave way under her, she tottered in and sank down on the bench by the window. The children gathered anxiously about her, the youngest one asked for papa; she never spoke with them but of him. He had such a noble disposition, and this was what made her love him; but now his heart was not with his family, it was engrossed in all sorts of business which brought him only unhappiness, and consequently they were all unhappy.

If only no misfortune had befallen him! Knud was so hot-tempered. Why had Lars come home alone? Why did he not stop? Should she run after him, or down the road after her husband? She was in an agony of distress, and the children pressed around her, asking what was the matter. But this she would not tell them, so rising she said they must eat supper alone, then got everything ready and helped them. All the while she kept glancing out on the road. He did not come. She undressed the children and put them to bed, and the youngest repeated the evening prayer while she bowed over him. She herself prayed with such fervor in the words which the infant lips so soothingly uttered that she did not heed the steps outside.

Knud stood upon the threshold, gazing at his little company at prayer. The mother drew herself up; all the children shouted: "Papa!" but he seated himself at once, and said, softly:

"Oh, let him say it once more!"

The mother turned again to the bedside, that he, meanwhile, should not see her face, for it would have seemed like intruding on his grief before he felt the need of revealing it. The little one folded its hands over its breast, and the rest did likewise, and it repeated, —

"I, a little child, pray Heaven
That my sins may be forgiven,
With time I 'll larger, wiser grow,
And my father and mother joy shall know,
If only Thou, dearest, dearest Lord,
Will help me to keep Thy precious word!
And now to our Heavenly Father's merciful keeping
Our souls let us trust while we 're sleeping."

What peace now fell upon the room! Not a minute had elapsed ere all the children were sleeping as in the arms of God; but the mother moved softly away and placed supper before the father, who was, however, unable to eat. But after he had gone to bed, he said, —

"Henceforth I shall be at home."

And his wife lay at his side trembling with joy which she dared not betray; and she thanked God for all that had happened, for whatever it might be it had resulted in good!

CHAPTER II.

In the course of a year Lars had become chairman of the parish board of supervisors, president of the savings-bank, and leading commissioner in the court of reconciliation; in short, he held every office to which his election had been possible. In the board of supervisors for

the amt (county) he was silent during the first year, but the second year he created the same sensation when he spoke as in the parish board; for here, too, coming forward in opposition to him who had previously been the guiding power, he became victorious over the entire rank and file and was from that time himself the leader. From this his path led him to the storthing (parliament), where his fame had preceded him, and where consequently there was no lack of challenges. But here, although steady and firm, he always remained retiring. He did not care for power except where he was well known, nor would he endanger his leadership at home by a possible defeat abroad.

For he had a pleasant life at home. When he stood by the church wall on Sundays, and the congregation walked slowly past, saluting him and stealing side glances at him, and one after another paused in order to exchange a few words with him, — then truly it might be said that he controlled the entire parish with a straw, for of course this hung in the corner of his mouth.

He deserved his honors. The road leading to the church, he had opened; the new church they were standing beside, he had built; this and much more was the fruit of the savings

bank which he had founded and now managed himself. For its resources were further made fruitful, and the parish was constantly held up as an example to all others of self-management and good order.

Knud Aakre had entirely withdrawn from the field, although at first he attended a few of the meetings of the board, because he had promised himself that he would continue to offer his services, even if it were not altogether pleasing to his pride. In the first proposal he had made, he became so greatly perplexed by Lars, who insisted upon having it represented in all its details, that, somewhat hurt, he said: "When Columbus discovered America he did not have it divided into parishes and deaneries; this came gradually;" whereupon Lars, in his reply, compared the discovery of America with Knud's proposal, — it so happened that this treated of stable improvements, — and afterwards Knud was known by no other name in the board than "Discovery of America." So Knud thought that as his usefulness had ceased, so too had his obligations to work, and he refused to accept further reëlections.

But he continued to be industrious; and in order that he might still have a field for usefulness, he enlarged his Sunday-school, and

placed it, by means of small contributions from the attendants, in communication with the mission cause, of which he soon became the centre and leader in his own and the surrounding counties. Thereupon Lars Högstad remarked, that if ever Knud undertook to collect money for any purpose, he must know beforehand that it was to do good thousands of miles from home.

There was, be it observed, no more strife between them. To be sure, they no longer associated with each other, but they bowed and spoke when they met. Knud always felt a little pain at the mere thought of Lars, but strove to suppress it, and persuade himself that matters could not have been otherwise. At a large wedding-party, many years afterward, where both were present and both were in good spirits, Knud mounted a chair and proposed a toast for the chairman of the parish board, and the first representative their amt had sent to the storthing! He spoke until he became deeply moved, and, as usual, expressed himself in an exceedingly handsome way. Every one thought it was honorably done, and Lars came up to him, and his gaze was unsteady as he said that for much of what he knew and was he was indebted to him.

At the next election of the board of supervisors Knud was again made chairman!

But had Lars Högstad foreseen what now followed, he would certainly not have used his influence for this. "Every event happens in its own time," says an old proverb, and just as Knud Aakre again entered the board, the best men of the parish were threatened with ruin, as the result of a speculation craze which had long been raging, but which now first began to demand its victims. It was said that Lars Högstad was the cause of this great disaster, for he had taught the parish to speculate. This penny fever had originated in the parish board of supervisors, for the board itself was the greatest speculator of all. Every one down to the laboring youth of twenty years desired in his transactions to make ten dollars out of one; a beginning of extreme avarice in the efforts to hoard, was followed by an excessive extravagance, and as all minds were bent only on money, there had at the same time developed a spirit of suspicion, of intolerance, of caviling, which resulted in lawsuits and hatred. This also was due to the example of the board, it was said, for among the first things Lars had done as chairman was to sue the venerable old priest for holding doubtful titles. The priest

had lost, but had also immediately resigned. At that time some had praised, some censured this suit; but it had proved a bad example. Now came the consequences of Lars's management, in the form of loss to every single man of property in the parish, consequently public opinion underwent a sharp change! The opposing force, too, soon found a leader, for Knud Aakre had come into the board, introduced there by Lars himself!

The struggle began forthwith. All those youths to whom Knud in his time had given instructions, were now grown up and were the most enlightened men in the parish, thoroughly at home in all its transactions and public affairs. It was against these men that Lars now had to contend, and they had borne him a grudge from their childhood up. When of an evening after one of these stormy proceedings he stood on the steps in front of his house, gazing over the parish, he could hear a sound as of distant rumbling thunder rising toward him from the large gards, now lying in the storm. He knew that the day they met their ruin, the savings-bank and himself would be overthrown, and all his long efforts would culminate in imprecations heaped on his head.

In these days of conflict and despair, a party

of railroad commissioners, who were to survey the route for a new road, made their appearance one evening at Högstad, the first gard at the entrance to the parish. In the course of conversation during the evening, Lars learned that there was a question whether the road should run through this valley or another parallel to it.

Like a flash of lightning it darted through his mind that if he could succeed in having it laid here, all property would rise in value, and not only would he himself be saved but his fame would be transmitted to the latest posterity! He could not sleep that night, for his eyes were dazzled by a glowing light, and sometimes he could even hear the sound of the cars. The next day he went himself with the commissioners while they examined the locality; his horse took them, and to his gard they returned. The next day they drove through the other valley; he was still with them, and he drove them back again to his house. They found a brilliant illumination at Högstad; the first men of the parish had been invited to be present at a magnificent party given in honor of the commissioners; it lasted until morning. But to no avail, for the nearer they came to a final issue, the more plainly it appeared that the

road could not pass through this locality without undue expense. The entrance to the valley lay through a narrow gorge, and just as it swung into the parish, the swollen river swung in also, so that the railroad would either have to take the same curve along the mountain that the highway now made, thus running at a needlessly high altitude and crossing the river twice, or it would have to run straight forward, and thus through the old, now unused churchyard. Now the church had but recently been removed, and it was not long since the last burial had taken place there.

If it only depended on a bit of old churchyard, thought Lars, whether or not this great blessing came into the parish, then he must use his name and his energy for the removal of this bstacle! He at once set forth on a visit to the priest and the dean, and furthermore to the diocese council; he talked and he negotiated, for he was armed with all possible facts concerning the immense advantage of the railroad on one hand, and the sentiments of the parish on the other, and actually succeeded in winning all parties. It was promised him that by a removal of part of the bodies to the new churchyard the objections might be considered set aside, and the royal permission obtained for the

churchyard to be taken for the line of railroad. It was told him that nothing was now needed but for him to set the question afloat in the board of supervisors.

The parish had grown as excited as himself: the spirit of speculation which for many years had been the only one prevailing in the parish, now became madly jubilant. There was nothing spoken or thought of but Lars's journey and its possible results. When he returned with the most magnificent promises, they made much of him; songs were sung in his praise; indeed, if at that time the largest gards had gone to destruction, one after another, no one would have paid the slightest attention to it: the speculation craze had given way to the railroad craze.

The board of supervisors assembled: there was presented for approval a respectful petition, that the old churchyard might be appropriated as the route of the railroad. This was unanimously adopted; there was even mention of giving Lars a vote of thanks and a coffee-pot in the form of a locomotive. But it was finally thought best to wait until the whole plan was carried into execution. The petition came back from the diocese council, with a demand for a list of all bodies that would have to be removed. The priest made out such a list, but in-

stead of sending it direct, he had his own reasons for sending it through the parish board. One of the members carried it to the next meeting. Here it fell to the lot of Lars, as chairman, to open the envelope and read the list.

Now it chanced that the first body to be disinterred was that of Lars's own grandfather! A little shudder ran through the assembly! Lars himself was startled, but nevertheless continued to read. Then it furthermore chanced that the second body was that of Knud Aakre's grandfather, for these two men had died within a short time of each other. Knud Aakre sprang from his seat; Lars paused; every one looked up in consternation, for old Knud Aakre had been the benefactor of the parish and its best beloved man, time out of mind. There was a dead silence, which lasted for some minutes. At last Lars cleared his throat and went on reading. But the further he proceeded the worse the matter grew; for the nearer they came to their own time, the dearer were the dead. When he had finished, Knud Aakre asked quietly whether the others did not agree with him in thinking that the air about them was filled with spirits. It was just beginning to grow dark in the room, and although they were mature men and were sitting in numbers to-

gether, they could not refrain from feeling alarmed. Lars produced a bundle of matches from his pocket and struck a light, dryly remarking, that this was no more than they knew beforehand.

"Yes, it is," said Knud pacing the floor, "it is more than I knew before. Now I begin to think that even railroads can be purchased too dearly."

These words sent a quiver through the audience, and observing that they had better further consider the matter, Knud made a motion to that effect.

"In the excitement which had prevailed," he said, "the benefit likely to be derived from the road had been overestimated. Even if the railroad did not pass through this parish, there would have to be stations at both ends of the valley; true, it would always be a little more troublesome to drive to them than to a station right in our midst; yet the difficulty would not be so very great that it would be necessary because of it to violate the repose of the dead."

Knud was one of those who when his thoughts were once in rapid motion could present the most convincing arguments; a moment before what he now said had not occurred to his mind, nevertheless it struck home to all.

Lars felt the danger of his position, and concluding that it was best to be cautious, apparently acquiesced in Knud's proposition to reconsider. Such emotions are always worse in the beginning, he thought; it is wisest to temporize with them.

But he had miscalculated. In ever increasing waves the dread of touching the dead of their own families swept over the inhabitants of the parish; what none of them had thought of as long as the matter existed merely in the abstract, now became a serious question when it was brought home to themselves. The women especially were excited, and the road near the court-house was black with people the day of the next meeting. It was a warm summer day, the windows were removed, and there were as many without the house as within. All felt that a great battle was about to be fought.

Lars came driving up with his handsome horse, and was greeted by all; he looked calmly and confidently around, not seeming to be surprised at anything. He took a seat near the window, found his straw, and a suspicion of a smile played over his keen face as he saw Knud Aakre rise to his feet to act as spokesman for all the dead in the old Högstad churchyard.

But Knud Aakre did not begin with the

churchyard. He began with an accurate exposition of how greatly the profits likely to accrue from having the railroad run through the parish had been overestimated in all this turmoil. He had positive proofs for every statement he made, for he had calculated the distance of each gard from the nearest station, and finally he asked, —

"Why has there been so much ado about this railroad, if not in behalf of the parish?"

This he could easily explain to them. There were those who had occasioned so great a disturbance that a still greater one was required to conceal it. Moreover, there were those who in the first outburst of excitement could sell their gards and belongings to strangers who were foolish enough to purchase. It was a shameful speculation which not only the living but the dead must serve to promote!

The effect of his address was very considerable. But Lars had once for all resolved to preserve his composure let come what would. He replied, therefore, with a smile, that he had been under the impression that Knud himself was eager for the railroad, and certainly no one would accuse him of having any knowledge of speculation. (Here followed a little laugh.) Knud had not evinced the slightest objection to

the removal of the bodies of common people for the sake of the railroad; but when his own grandfather's body was in question then it suddenly affected the welfare of the whole community! He said no more, but looked with a faint smile at Knud, as did also several others. Meanwhile, Knud Aakre surprised both him and them by replying: —

"I confess it; I did not comprehend the matter until it touched my own family feelings; it is possible that this may be a shame, but it would have been a far greater one not to have realized it at last — as is the case with Lars! Never," he concluded, "could this raillery have been more out of place; for to people with common decency the whole affair is absolutely revolting."

"This feeling is something that has come up quite recently," replied Lars, "we may therefore hope that it will soon pass over again. May it not perhaps help the matter a little to think what the priest, dean, diocese council, engineers, and government will all say if we first unanimously set the ball in motion, then come and beg to have it stopped? If we first are jubilant and sing songs, then weep and deliver funeral orations? If they do not say that we have gone mad in this parish, they must at all

events say that we have acted rather strangely of late."

"Yes, God knows, they may well think so!" replied Knud. "We have, indeed, acted very strangely of late, and it is high time for us to mend our ways. Things have come to a serious pass when we can each disinter his own grandfather to make way for a railroad; when we can disturb the resting-place of the dead in order that our own burdens may the more easily be carried. For is not this rooting in our churchyard in order to make it yield us food the same thing? What is buried there in the name of Jesus, we take up in Moloch's name —this is but little better than eating the bones of our ancestors."

"Such is the course of nature," said Lars, dryly.

"Yes, of plants and of animals."

"And are not we animals?"

"We are, but also the children of the living God, who have buried our dead in faith in Him: it is He who shall rouse them and not we."

"Oh, you are talking idly! Are we not obliged to have the graves dug up at any rate, when their turn comes? What harm is there in having it happen a few years earlier?"

"I will tell you. What was born of them still draws the breath of life; what they built up yet remains; what they loved, taught, and suffered for, lives about us and within us; and should we not allow them to rest in peace?"

"Your warmth shows me that you are thinking of your own grandfather again," replied Lars, "and I must say it seems to me high time the parish should be rid of *him*. He monopolized too much space while he lived; and so it is scarcely worth while to have him lie in the way now that he is dead. Should his corpse prevent a blessing to this parish that would extend through a hundred generations, we may truly say that of all who have been born here, *he* has done us the greatest harm."

Knud Aakre tossed back his disorderly hair, his eyes flashed, his whole person looked like a bent steel spring.

"How much of a blessing what you are speaking about may be, I have already shown. It has the same character as all the other blessings with which you have supplied the parish, namely, a doubtful one. It is true, you have provided us with a new church, but you have also filled it with a new spirit, — and it is not that of love. True, you have furnished us with new roads, but also with new roads to de-

struction, as is now plainly manifest in the misfortunes of many. True, you have diminished our public taxes, but you have increased our private ones; lawsuits, promissory notes, and bankruptcies are no fruitful gifts to a community. And *you* dare dishonor in his grave the man whom the whole parish blesses? You dare assert that he lies in our way; aye, no doubt he does lie in your way, this is plain enough now, for his grave will be the cause of your downfall! The spirit which has reigned over you, and until to-day over us all, was not born to rule but to enter into servitude. The churchyard will surely be allowed to remain in peace; but to-day it shall have one grave added to it, namely, that of your popularity which is now to be buried there."

Lars Högstad rose, white as a sheet; his lips parted, but he was unable to utter a word, and the straw fell. After three or four vain efforts to find it again and recover his powers of speech, he burst forth like a volcano with, —

"And so these are the thanks I get for all my toil and drudgery! If such a woman-preacher is to be allowed to rule — why, then, may the devil be your chairman if ever I set my foot here again! I have kept things together until this day, and after me your trash

will fall into a thousand pieces, but let it tumble down now — here is the register!" And he flung it on the table. "Shame on such an assembly of old women and brats!" Here he struck the table with great violence. "Shame on the whole parish that it can see a man rewarded as I am now."

He brought down his fist once more with such force that the great court-house table shook, and the inkstand with its entire contents tumbled to the floor, marking for all future generations the spot where Lars Högstad fell in spite of all his prudence, his long rule, and his patience.

He rushed to the door and in a few moments had left the place. The entire assembly remained motionless; for the might of his voice and of his wrath had frightened them, until Knud Aakre, remembering the taunt he had received at the time of *his* fall, with beaming countenance and imitating Lars's voice, exclaimed: —

"Is *this* to be the decisive blow in the matter?"

The whole assembly burst into peals of merriment at these words! The solemn meeting ended in laughter, talk, and high glee; only a few left the place, those remaining behind

called for drink to add to their food, and a night of thunder succeeded a day of lightning. Every one felt as happy and independent as of yore, ere the commanding spirit of Lars had cowed their souls into dumb obedience. They drank toasts to their freedom; they sang, indeed, finally they danced, Knud Aakre and the vice-chairman taking the lead and all the rest following, while boys and girls joined in, and the young folks outside shouted "Hurrah!" for such a jollification they had never before seen!

CHAPTER III.

Lars moved about in the large rooms at Högstad, without speaking a word. His wife, who loved him, but always in fear and trembling, dared not come into his presence. The management of the gard and of the house might be carried on as best it could, while on the other hand there kept growing a multitude of letters, which passed back and forth between Högstad and the parish, and Högstad and the post-office; for Lars had claims against the parish board, and these not being satisfied he prosecuted;

against the savings-bank, which were also unsatisfied, and so resulted in another suit. He took offense at expressions in the letters he received and went to law again, now against the chairman of the parish board, now against the president of the savings-bank. At the same time there were dreadful articles in the newspapers, which report attributed to him, and which were the cause of great dissension in the parish, inciting neighbor against neighbor Sometimes he was absent whole weeks, no one knew where, and when he returned he lived as secluded as before. At church he had not been seen after the great scene at the representatives' meeting.

Then one Saturday evening the priest brought tidings that the railroad was to run through the parish after all, and across the old churchyard! It struck like lightning into every home. The unanimous opposition of the parish board had been in vain, Lars Högstad's influence had been stronger. This was the meaning of his journeys, this was his work! Involuntary admiration of the man and his stubborn persistence tended to suppress the dissatisfaction of the people at their own defeat, and the more they discussed the matter the more reconciled they became; for a fact accom

plished always contains within itself reasons why it is so, which gradually force themselves upon us after there is no longer possibility of change. The people assembled about the church the next day, and they could not help laughing as they met one another. And just as the whole congregation, young and old, men and women, aye, even children, were all talking about Lars Högstad, his ability, his rigorous will, his immense influence, he himself with his whole household came driving up in four conveyances, one after the other. It was two years since his last visit there! He alighted and passed through the crowd, while all, as by one impulse, unhesitatingly greeted him, but he did not deign to bestow a glance on either side, nor to return a single salutation. His little wife, pale as death, followed him. Inside of the church, the astonishment grew to such a pitch that as one after another caught sight of him they stopped singing and only stared at him. Knud Aakre, who sat in his pew in front of Lars, noticed that there was something the matter, and as he perceived nothing remarkable in front of him, he turned round. He saw Lars bowed over his hymn-book, searching for the place.

He had not seen him since that evening at

the meeting, and such a complete change he had not believed possible. For this was no victor! The thin, soft hair was thinner than ever, the face was haggard and emaciated, the eyes hollow and bloodshot, the giant neck had dwindled into wrinkles and cords. Knud comprehended at a glance what this man had gone through; he was seized with a feeling of strong sympathy, indeed, he felt something of the old love stirring within his breast. He prayed for Lars to his God, and made a resolute vow that he would seek him after service; but Lars had started on ahead. Knud resolved to call on him that evening. His wife, however, held him back.

"Lars is one of those," said she, "who can scarcely bear a debt of gratitude: keep away from him until he has an opportunity to do you some favor, and then perhaps he will come to you!"

But he did not come. He appeared now and then at church, but nowhere else, and he associated with no one. On the other hand, he now devoted himself to his gard and other business with the passionate zeal of one who had determined to make amends in one year for the neglect of many: and, indeed, there were those who said that this was imperative.

Railroad operations in the valley began very soon. As the line was to go directly past Lars's gard, he tore down the portion of his house that faced the road, in order to build a large and handsome balcony, for he was determined that his gard should attract attention. This work was just being done when the temporary rails for the conveyance of gravel and timber to the road were laid and a small locomotive was sent to the spot. It was a beautiful autumn evening that the first gravel car was to pass over the road. Lars stood on his front steps, to hear the first signal and to see the first column of smoke; all the people of the gard were gathered about him. He gazed over the parish, illumined by the setting sun, and he felt that he would be remembered as long as a train should come roaring through this fertile valley. A sense of forgiveness glided into his soul. He looked toward the churchyard, a part of which still remained, with crosses bowed down to the ground, but a part of it was now the railroad. He was just endeavoring to define his own feeling when the first signal whistled, and presently the train came slowly working its way along, attended by a cloud of smoke, mingled with sparks, for the locomotive was fed with pine wood. The wind blew to

ward the house so that those standing without were soon enveloped in a dense smoke, but as this cleared away Lars saw the train working its way down through the valley like a strong will.

He was content, and entered his house like one who has come from a long day's work. The image of his grandfather stood before him at this moment. This grandfather had raised the family from poverty to prosperity; true, a portion of his honor as a citizen was consumed in the act, but he had advanced nevertheless! His faults were the prevailing ones of his time: they were based on the uncertain boundary lines of the moral conceptions of his day. Every age has its uncertain moral distinctions and its victims to the endeavor to define them properly.

Honor be to him in his grave, for he had suffered and toiled! Peace be with him! It must be good to rest in the end. But he was not allowed to rest because of his grandson's vast ambition; his ashes were thrown up with the stones and the gravel. Nonsense! he would only smile that his grandson's work passed over his head.

Amid thoughts like these Lars had undressed and gone to bed. Once more his grandfather'

image glided before him. It was sterner now than the first time. Weariness enfeebles us, and Lars began to reproach himself. But he defended himself also. What did his grandfather want? Surely he ought to be satisfied now, for the family honor was proclaimed in loud tones above his grave. Who else had such a monument? And yet what is this? These two monstrous eyes of fire and this hissing, roaring sound belong no longer to the locomotive, for they turn away from the railroad track. And from the churchyard straight toward the house comes an immense procession. The eyes of fire are his grandfather's, and the long line of followers are all the dead. The train advances steadily toward the gard, roaring, crackling, flashing. The windows blaze in the reflection of the dead men's eyes. Lars made a mighty effort to control himself, for this was a dream, unquestionably but a dream. Only wait until I am awake! There, now I am awake. Come on, poor ghosts!

And lo! they really did come from the churchyard, overthrowing road, rails, locomotive and train, so that these fell with a mighty crash to the ground, and the green sod appeared in their stead, dotted with graves and crosses as before. Like mighty champions they

advanced, and the hymn, "Let the dead repose in peace!" preceded them. Lars knew it; for through all these years it had been sighing within his soul, and now it had become his requiem; for this was death and death's visions. The cold sweat started out over his whole body, for nearer and nearer — and behold, on the window pane! there they are now, and he heard some one speak his name. Overpowered with dread he struggled to scream; for he was being strangled, a cold hand was clinching his throat and he regained his voice in an agonized: "Help me!" and awoke. The window had been broken in from the outside; the pieces flew all about his head. He sprang up. A man stood at the window, surrounded by smoke and flames.

"The gard is on fire, Lars! We will help you out!"

It was Knud Aakre.

When Lars regained his consciousness, he was lying outside in a bleak wind, which chilled his limbs. There was not a soul with him; he saw the flaming gard to the left; around him his cattle were grazing and making their voices heard; the sheep were huddled together in a frightened flock; the household goods were scattered about, and when he looked again he

saw some one sitting on a knoll close by, weeping. It was his wife. He called her by name. She started.

"The Lord Jesus be praised that you are alive!" cried she, coming forward and seating herself, or rather throwing herself down in front of him. "O God! O God! We surely have had enough of this railroad now!"

"The railroad?" asked he, but ere the words had escaped his lips, a clear comprehension of the case passed like a shudder over him; for, of course, sparks from the locomotive that had fallen among the shavings of the new side wall had been the cause of the fire. Lars sat there brooding in silence; his wife, not daring to utter another word, began to search for his clothes; for what she had spread over him, as he lay senseless, had fallen off. He accepted her attentions in silence, but as she knelt before him to cover his feet, he laid his hand on her head. Falling forward she buried her face in his lap and wept aloud. There were many who eyed her curiously. But Lars understood her and said,—

"You are the only friend I have."

Even though it had cost the gard to hear these words, it mattered not to her; she felt so happy that she gained courage, and rising up

and looking humbly into her husband's face, she said, —

"Because there is no one else who understands you."

Then a hard heart melted, and tears rolled down the man's cheeks as he clung to his wife's hand.

Now he talked to her as to his own soul. Now too she opened to him her mind. They also talked about how all this had happened, or rather he listened while she told about it. Knud Aakre had been the first to see the fire, had roused his people, sent the girls out over his parish, while he had hastened himself with men and horses to the scene of the conflagration, where all were sleeping. He had engineered the extinguishing of the flames and the rescuing of the household goods, and had himself dragged Lars from the burning room, and carried him to the left side of the house from where the wind was blowing and had laid him out here in the churchyard.

And while they were talking of this, some one came driving rapidly up the road and turned into the churchyard, where he alighted. It was Knud, who had been home after his church-cart, — the one in which they had so many times ridden together to and from the

meetings of the parish board. Now he requested Lars to get in and ride home with him. They grasped each other by the hand, the one sitting, the other standing.

"Come with me now," said Knud.

Without a word of reply, Lars rose. Side by side they walked to the cart. Lars was helped in; Knud sat down beside him. What they talked about as they drove along, or afterwards in the little chamber at Aakre, where they remained together until late in the morning, has never been known. But from that day they were inseparable as before.

As soon as misfortune overtakes a man, every one learns what he is worth. And so the parish undertook to rebuild Lars Högstad's houses, and to make them larger and handsomer than any others in the valley. He was reëlected chairman, but with Knud Aakre at his side; he never again failed to take counsel of Knud's intelligence and heart — and from that day forth nothing went to ruin.

THROND.

THERE was once a man named Alf, who had raised great expectations among his fellow-parishioners because he excelled most of them both in the work he accomplished and in the advice he gave. Now when this man was thirty years old, he went to live up the mountain and cleared a piece of land for farming, about fourteen miles from any settlement. Many people wondered how he could endure thus depending on himself for companionship, but they were still more astonished when, a few years later, a young girl from the valley, and one, too, who had been the gayest of the gay at all the social gatherings and dances of the parish, was willing to share his solitude.

This couple were called "the people in the wood," and the man was known by the name "Alf in the wood." People viewed him with inquisitive eyes when they met him at church or at work, because they did not understand

him; but neither did he take the trouble to give them any explanation of his conduct. His wife was only seen in the parish twice, and on one of these occasions it was to present a child for baptism.

This child was a son, and he was called Throng. When he grew larger his parents often talked about needing help, and as they could not afford to take a full-grown servant, they hired what they called "a half:" they brought into their house a girl of fourteen, who took care of the boy while the father and mother were busy in the field.

This girl was not the brightest person in the world, and the boy soon observed that his mother's words were easy to comprehend, but that it was hard to get at the meaning of what Ragnhild said. He never talked much with his father, and he was rather afraid of him, for the house had to be kept very quiet when he was at home.

One Christmas Eve — they were burning two candles on the table, and the father was drinking from a white flask — the father took the boy up in his arms and set him on his lap, looked him sternly in the eyes and exclaimed, —

"Ugh, boy!" Then he added more gently:

"Why, you are not so much afraid. Would you have the courage to listen to a story?"

The boy made no reply, but he looked full in his father's face. His father then told him about a man from Vaage, whose name was Blessom. This man was in Copenhagen for the purpose of getting the king's verdict in a law-suit he was engaged in, and he was detained so long that Christmas Eve overtook him there. Blessom was greatly annoyed at this, and as he was sauntering about the streets fancying himself at home, he saw a very large man, in a white, short coat, walking in front of him.

"How fast you are walking!" said Blessom.

"I have a long distance to go in order to get home this evening," replied the man.

"Where are you going?"

"To Vaage," answered the man, and walked on.

"Why, that is very nice," said Blessom, "for that is where I was going, too."

"Well, then, you may ride with me, if you will stand on the runners of my sledge," answered the man, and turned into a side street where his horse was standing.

He mounted his seat and looked over his shoulder at Blessom, who was just getting on the runners.

"You had better hold fast," said the stranger.

Blessom did as he was told, and it was well he did, for their journey was evidently not by land.

"It seems to me that you are driving on the water," cried Blessom.

"I am," said the man, and the spray whirled about them.

But after a while it seemed to Blessom their course no longer lay on the water.

"It seems to me we are moving through the air," said he.

"Yes, so we are," replied the stranger.

But when they had gone still farther, Blessom thought he recognized the parish they were driving through.

"Is not this Vaage?" cried he.

"Yes, now we are there," replied the stranger, and it seemed to Blessom that they had gone pretty fast.

"Thank you for the good ride," said he.

"Thanks to yourself," replied the man, and added, as he whipped up his horse, "Now you had better not look after me."

"No, indeed," thought Blessom, and started over the hills for home.

But just then so loud and terrible a crash

was heard behind him that it seemed as if the whole mountain must be tumbling down, and a bright light was shed over the surrounding landscape; he looked round and beheld the stranger in the white coat driving through the crackling flames into the open mountain, which was yawning wide to receive him, like some huge gate. Blessom felt somewhat strange in regard to his traveling companion; and thought he would look in another direction; but as he had turned his head so it remained, and never more could Blessom get it straight again.

The boy had never heard anything to equal this in all his life. He dared not ask his father for more, but early the next morning he asked his mother if she knew any stories. Yes, of course she did; but hers were chiefly about princesses who were in captivity for seven years, until the right prince came along. The boy believed that everything he heard or read about took place close around him.

He was about eight years old when the first stranger entered their door one winter evening. He had black hair, and this was something Throng had never seen before. The stranger saluted them with a short "Good-evening!" and came forward. Throng grew frightened and sat down on a cricket by the hearth. The

mother asked the man to take a seat on the bench along the wall; he did so, and then the mother could examine his face more closely.

"Dear me! is not this Knud the fiddler?" cried she.

"Yes, to be sure it is. It has been a long time since I played at your wedding."

"Oh, yes; it is quite a while now. Have you been on a long journey?"

"I have been playing for Christmas, on the other side of the mountain. But half way down the slope I began to feel very badly, and I was obliged to come in here to rest."

The mother brought forward food for him; he sat down to the table, but did not say "in the name of Jesus," as the boy had been accustomed to hear. When he had finished eating, he got up from the table, and said, —

"Now I feel very comfortable; let me rest a little while."

And he was allowed to rest on Thrond's bed.

For Thrond a bed was made on the floor. As the boy lay there, he felt cold on the side that was turned away from the fire, and that was the left side. He discovered that it was because this side was exposed to the chill night air; for he was lying out in the wood. How came he in the wood? He got up and looked

about him, and saw that there was fire burning a long distance off, and that he was actually alone in the wood. He longed to go home to the fire; but could not stir from the spot. Then a great fear overcame him; for wild beasts might be roaming about, trolls and ghosts might appear to him; he must get home to the fire; but he could not stir from the spot. Then his terror grew, he strove with all his might to gain self-control, and was at last able to cry, "Mother," and then he awoke.

"Dear child, you have had bad dreams," said she, and took him up.

A shudder ran through him, and he glanced round. The stranger was gone, and he dared not inquire after him.

His mother appeared in her black dress, and started for the parish. She came home with two new strangers, who also had black hair and who wore flat caps. They did not say "in the name of Jesus," when they ate, and they talked in low tones with the father. Afterward the latter and they went into the barn, and came out again with a large box, which the men carried between them. They placed it on a sled, and said farewell. Then the mother said: —

"Wait a little, and take with you the smaller box he brought here with him."

And she went in to get it. But one of the men said, —

"*He* can have that," and he pointed at Throng.

"Use it as well as *he* who is now lying *here*," added the other stranger, pointing at the large box.

Then they both laughed and went on. Throng looked at the little box which thus came into his possession.

"What is there in it?" asked he.

"Carry it in and find out," said the mother.

He did as he was told, but his mother helped him open it. Then a great joy lighted up his face; for he saw something very light and fine lying there.

"Take it up," said his mother.

He put just one finger down on it, but quickly drew it back again, in great alarm.

"It cries," said he.

"Have courage," said his mother, and he grasped it with his whole hand and drew it forth from the box.

He weighed it and turned it round, he laughed and felt of it.

"Dear me! what is it?" asked he, for it was as light as a toy.

"It is a fiddle."

This was the way that Throud Alfson got his first violin.

The father could play a little, and he taught the boy how to handle the instrument; the mother could sing the tunes she remembered from her dancing days, and these the boy learned, but soon began to make new ones for himself. He played all the time he was not at his books; he played until his father once told him he was fading away before his eyes. All the boy had read and heard until that time was put into the fiddle. The tender, delicate string was his mother; the one that lay close beside it, and always accompanied his mother, was Ragnhild. The coarse string, which he seldom ventured to play on, was his father. But of the last solemn string he was half afraid, and he gave no name to it. When he played a wrong note on the E string, it was the cat; but when he took a wrong note on his father's string, it was the ox. The bow was Blessom, who drove from Copenhagen to Vaage in one night. And every tune he played represented something. The one containing the long solemn tones was his mother in her black dress. The one that jerked and skipped was like Moses, who stuttered and smote the rock with his staff. The one that had to be played quietly, with the bow

moving lightly over the strings, was the hulder in yonder fog, calling together her cattle, where no one but herself could see.

But the music wafted him onward over the mountains, and a great yearning took possession of his soul. One day when his father told about a little boy who had been playing at the fair and who had earned a great deal of money, Throng waited for his mother in the kitchen and asked her softly if he could not go to the fair and play for people.

"Who ever heard of such a thing!" said his mother; but she immediately spoke to his father about it.

"He will get out into the world soon enough," answered the father; and he spoke in such a way that the mother did not ask again.

Shortly after this, the father and mother were talking at table about some new settlers who had recently moved up on the mountain and were about to be married. They had no fiddler for the wedding, the father said.

"Could not I be the fiddler?" whispered the boy, when he was alone in the kitchen once more with his mother.

"What, a little boy like you?" said she; but she went out to the barn where his father was and told him about it.

"He has never been in the parish," she added, "he has never seen a church."

"I should not think you would ask about such things," said Alf; but neither did he say anything more, and so the mother thought she had permission. Consequently she went over to the new settlers and offered the boy's services.

"The way he plays," said she, "no little boy has ever played before;" and the boy was to be allowed to come.

What joy there was at home! Throng played from morning until evening and practiced new tunes; at night he dreamed about them: they bore him far over the hills, away to foreign lands, as though he were afloat on sailing clouds. His mother made a new suit of clothes for him; but his father would not take part in what was going on.

The last night he did not sleep, but thought out a new tune about the church which he had never seen. He was up early in the morning, and so was his mother, in order to get him his breakfast, but he could not eat. He put on his new clothes and took his fiddle in his hand, and it seemed to him as though a bright light were glowing before his eyes. His mother accompanied him out on the flag-stone, and stood

watching him as he ascended the slopes; — it was the first time he had left home.

His father got quietly out of bed and walked to the window; he stood there following the boy with his eyes until he heard the mother out on the flag-stone, then he went back to bed and was lying down when she came in.

She kept stirring about him, as if she wanted to relieve her mind of something. And finally it came out: —

"I really think I must walk down to the church and see how things are going."

He made no reply, and therefore she considered the matter settled, dressed herself and started.

It was a glorious, sunny day, the boy walked rapidly onward; he listened to the song of the birds and saw the sun glittering among the foliage, while he proceeded on his way, with his fiddle under his arm. And when he reached the bride's house, he was still so occupied with his own thoughts, that he observed neither the bridal splendor nor the procession; he merely asked if they were about to start, and learned that they were. He walked on in advance with his fiddle, and he played the whole morning into it, and the tones he produced resounded through the trees.

"Will we soon see the church?" he asked over his shoulder.

For a long time he received only "No" for an answer, but at last some one said:

"As soon as you reach that crag yonder, you will see it."

He threw his newest tune into the fiddle, the bow danced on the strings, and he kept his eyes fixed intently before him. There lay the parish right in front of him!

The first thing he saw was a little light mist, curling like smoke on the opposite mountain side. His eyes wandered over the green meadow and the large houses, with windows which glistened beneath the scorching rays of the sun, like the glacier on a winter's day. The houses kept increasing in size, the windows in number, and here on one side of him lay the enormous red house, in front of which horses were tied; little children were playing on a hill, dogs were sitting watching them. But everywhere there penetrated a long, heavy tone, that shook him from head to foot, and everything he saw seemed to vibrate with that tone. Then suddenly he saw a large, straight house, with a tall, glittering staff reaching up to the skies. And below, a hundred windows blazed, so that the house seemed to be enveloped in flames.

This must be the church, the boy thought, and the music must come from it! Round about stood a vast multitude of people, and they all looked alike! He put them forthwith into relations with the church, and thus acquired a respect mingled with awe for the smallest child he saw.

"Now I must play," thought Throud, and tried to do so.

But what was this? The fiddle had no longer any sound in it. There must be some defect in the strings; he examined, but could find none.

"Then it must be because I do not press on hard enough, and he drew his bow with a firmer hand; but the fiddle seemed as if it were cracked.

He changed the tune that was meant to represent the church into another, but with equally bad results; no music was produced, only squeaking and wailing. He felt the cold sweat start out over his face, he thought of all these wise people who were standing here and perhaps laughing him to scorn, this boy who at home could play so beautifully but who here failed to bring out a single tone!

"Thank God that mother is not here to see my shame!" said he softly to himself, as he

played among the people; but lo! there she stood, in her black dress, and she shrank farther and farther away.

At that moment he beheld far up on the spire, the black-haired man who had given him the fiddle. "Give it back to me," he now shouted, laughing and stretching out his arms, and the spire went up and down with him, up and down. But the boy took the fiddle under one arm, screaming, "You shall not have it!" and turning, ran away from the people, beyond the houses, onward through meadow and field, until his strength forsook him, and then sank to the ground.

There he lay for a long time, with his face toward the earth, and when finally he looked round he saw and heard only God's infinite blue sky that floated above him, with its everlasting sough. This was so terrible to him that he had to turn his face to the ground again. When he raised his head once more his eyes fell on his fiddle, which lay at his side.

"This is all your fault!" shouted the boy, and seized the instrument with the intention of lashing it to pieces, but hesitated as he looked at it.

"We have had many a happy hour together,' said he, then paused. Presently he said: "The

strings must be severed, for they are worthless." And he took out a knife and cut. "Oh!" cried the E string, in a short, pained tone. The boy cut. "Oh!" wailed the next; but the boy cut. "Oh!" said the third, mournfully; and he paused at the fourth. A sharp pain seized him; that fourth string, to which he never dared give a name, he did not cut. Now a feeling came over him that it was not the fault of the strings that he was unable to play, and just then he saw his mother walking slowly up the slope toward where he was lying, that she might take him home with her. A greater fright than ever overcame him; he held the fiddle by the severed strings, sprang to his feet, and shouted down to her, —

"No, mother! I will not go home again until I can play what I have seen to-day."

A DANGEROUS WOOING.

When Aslaug had become a grown-up girl, there was not much peace to be had at Huseby; for there the finest boys in the parish quarreled and fought night after night. It was worst of all on Saturday nights; but then old Knud Huseby never went to bed without keeping his leather breeches on, nor without having a birch stick by his bedside.

"If I have a daughter, I shall look after her, too," said old Huseby.

Thore Næset was only a houseman's son; nevertheless there were those who said that he was the one who came oftenest to see the gardman's daughter at Huseby. Old Knud did not like this, and declared also that it was not true, "for he had never seen him there." But people smiled slyly among themselves, and thought that had he searched in the corners of the room instead of fighting with all those who were making a noise and uproar in the middle of the floor, he would have found Thore.

Spring came and Aslaug went to the sæter with the cattle. Then, when the day was warm down in the valley, and the mountain rose cool above the haze, and when the bells tinkled, the shepherd dog barked, and Aslaug sang and blew the loor on the mountain side, then the hearts of the young fellows who were at work down on the meadow would ache, and the first Saturday night they all started up to the mountain sæter, one faster than the other. But still more rapidly did they come down again, for behind the door at the sæter there stood one who received each of them as he came, and gave him so sound a whipping that he forever afterward remembered the threat that followed it, —

"Come again another time and you shall have some more."

According to what these young fellows knew, there was only one in the parish who could use his fists in this way, and that was Thore Næset. And these rich gardmen's sons thought it was a shame that this houseman's son should cut them all out at the Huseby sæter.

So thought, also, old Knud, when the matter reached his ears, and said, moreover, that if there was nobody else who could tackle Thore, then he and his sons would try it. Knud, it is

true, was growing old, but although he was nearly sixty, he would at times have a wrestle or two with his eldest son, when it was too dull for him at some party or other.

Up to the Huseby sæter there was but one road, and that led straight through the gard. The next Saturday evening, as Thore was going to the sæter, and was stealing on his tiptoes across the yard, a man rushed right at his breast as he came near the barn.

"What do you want of me?" said Thore, and knocked his assailant flat on the ground.

"That you shall soon find out," said another fellow from behind, giving Thore a blow on the back of the head. This was the brother of the former assailant.

"Here comes the third," said old Knud, rushing forward to join the fray.

The danger made Thore stronger. He was as limber as a willow and his blows left their marks. He dodged from one side to the other. Where the blows fell he was not, and where his opponents least expected blows from him, they got them. He was, however, at last completely beaten; but old Knud frequently said afterwards that a stouter fellow he had scarcely ever tackled. The fight was continued until blood flowed, but then Huseby cried, —

"Stop!" and added, "If you can manage to get by the Huseby wolf and his cubs next Saturday night, the girl shall be yours."

Thore dragged himself homeward as best he could; and as soon as he got home he went to bed.

At Huseby there was much talk about the fight; but everybody said, —

"What did he want there?"

There was one, however, who did not say so, and that was Aslaug. She had expected Thore that Saturday night, and when she heard what had taken place between him and her father, she sat down and had a good cry, saying to herself, —

"If I cannot have Thore, there will never be another happy day for me in this world."

Thore had to keep his bed all day Sunday; and Monday, too, he felt that he must do the same. Tuesday came, and it was such a beautiful day. It had rained during the night. The mountain was wet and green. The fragrance of the leaves was wafted in through the open window; down the mountain sides came the sound of the cow-bells, and some one was heard singing up in the glen. Had it not been for his mother, who was sitting in the room, Thore would have wept from impatient vexation.

Wednesday came and still Thore was in bed; but on Thursday he began to wonder whether he could not get well by Saturday; and on Friday he rose. He remembered well the words Aslaug's father had spoken: "If you can manage to get by the Huseby wolf and his cubs next Saturday, the girl shall be yours." He looked over toward the Huseby sæter again and again. "I cannot get more than another thrashing," thought Thore.

Up to the Huseby sæter there was but one road, as before stated; but a clever fellow might manage to get there, even if he did not take the beaten track. If he rowed out on the fjord below, and past the little tongue of land yonder, and thus reached the other side of the mountain, he might contrive to climb it, though it was so steep that a goat could scarcely venture there — and a goat is not very apt to be timid in climbing the mountains, you know.

Saturday came, and Thore stayed without doors all day long. The sunlight played upon the foliage, and every now and then an alluring song was heard from the mountains. As evening drew near, and the mist was stealing up the slope, he was still sitting outside of the door. He looked up the mountain, and all was still. He looked over toward the Huseby gard

Then he pushed out his boat and rowed round the point of land.

Up at the sæter sat Aslaug, through with her day's work. She was thinking that Thore would not come this evening, but that there would come all the more in his stead. Presently she let loose the dog, but told no one whither she was going. She seated herself where she could look down into the valley; but a dense fog was rising, and, moreover, she felt little disposed to look down that way, for everything reminded her of what had occurred. So she moved, and without thinking what she was doing, she happened to go over to the other side of the mountain, and there she sat down and gazed out over the sea. There was so much peace in this far-reaching sea-view!

Then she felt like singing. She chose a song with long notes, and the music sounded far into the still night. She felt gladdened by it, and so she sang another verse. But then it seemed to her as if some one answered her from the glen far below. "Dear me, what can that be?" thought Aslaug. She went forward to the brink of the precipice, and threw her arms around a slender birch, which hung trembling over the steep. She looked down but saw nothing. The fjord lay silent and calm. Not

even a bird ruffled its smooth surface. Aslaug sat down and began singing again. Then she was sure that some one responded with the same tune and nearer than the first time. "It must be somebody, after all." Aslaug sprang up and bent out over the brink of the steep; and there, down at the foot of a rocky wall, she saw a boat moored, and it was so far down that it appeared like a tiny shell. She looked a little farther up, and her eyes fell on a red cap, and under the cap she saw a young man, who was working his way up the almost perpendicular side of the mountain. "Dear me, who can that be?" asked Aslaug, as she let go of the birch and sprang far back.

She dared not answer her own question, for she knew very well who it was. She threw herself down on the greensward and took hold of the grass with both hands, as though it were *she* who must not let go her hold. But the grass came up by the roots.

She cried aloud and prayed God to help Thore. But then it struck her that this conduct of Thore's was really tempting God, and therefore no help could be expected.

"Just this once!" she implored.

And she threw her arms around the dog, as if it were Thore she were keeping from loosing

nis hold. She rolled over the grass with him, and the moments seemed years. But then the dog tore himself away. "Bow-bow," he barked over the brink of the steep and wagged his tail. "Bow-wow," he barked at Aslaug, and threw his forepaws up on her. "Bow-wow," over the precipice again; and a red cap appeared over the brow of the mountain and Thore lay in her arms.

Now when old Knud Huseby heard of this, he made a very sensible remark, for he said, —

"That boy is worth having; the girl shall be his."

THE BEAR HUNTER.

A WORSE boy to tell lies than the priest's oldest son could scarcely be found in the whole parish; he was also a very good reader; there was no lack on that score, and what he read the peasants were glad to hear, but when it was something they were well pleased with, he would make up more of the same kind, as much as he thought they wanted. His own stories were mostly about strong men and about love.

Soon the priest noticed that the threshing up in the barn was being done in a more and more lazy manner; he went to see what the matter was, and behold it was Thorvald, who stood there telling stories. Soon the quantity of wood brought home from the forest became wonderfully small; he went to see what the trouble was, and there stood Thorvald again, telling stories. There must be an end to this, thought the priest; and he sent the boy to the nearest school.

Only peasant children attended this school, but the priest thought it would be too expensive to keep a private tutor for this one boy. But Thorvald had not been a week among the scholars, before one of his schoolmates came in pale as a corpse, and said he had met some of the underground folk coming along the road. Another boy, still paler, followed, and said that he had actually seen a man without a head walking about and moving the boats down by the landing-place. And what was worst of all, little Knud Pladsen and his young sister, one evening, as they were returning home from school, came running back, almost out of their senses, crying, and declaring that they had heard the bear up near the parsonage; nay, little Marit had even seen his gray eyes sparkle. But now the school-master got terribly angry, struck the table with his ferule, and asked what the deuce — God pardon me my wicked sin — had gotten into the school-children.

"One is growing more crazy than the other," said he. "There lurks a hulder in every bush; there sits a merman under every boat; the bear is out in midwinter! Have you no more faith in your God or in your catechism," quoth he, "or do you believe in all kinds of deviltry, and in all the terrible powers of darkness, and

in bears roaming about in the middle of winter?"

But then he calmed down somewhat after a while, and asked little Marit whether she really did not dare to go home. The child sobbed and cried, and declared that it was utterly impossible. The school-master then said that Thorvald, who was the eldest of those remaining, should go with her through the wood.

"No, he has seen the bear himself," cried Marit; "it was he who told us about it."

Thorvald shrank within himself, where he was sitting, especially when the school-master looked at him and drew the ferule affectionately through his left hand.

"Have you seen the bear?" he asked, quietly.

"Well, at any rate, I know," said Thorvald, "that our overseer found a bear's den up in the priest's wood, the day he was out ptarmigan shooting."

"But have you seen the bear yourself?"

"It was not one, it was two large ones, and perhaps there were two smaller ones besides, as the old ones generally have their last year's cubs and this year's, too, with them."

"But have *you* seen them?" reiterated the school-master, still more mildly, as he kept drawing the ferule between his fingers.

Thorvald was silent for a moment.

" I saw the bear that Lars, the hunter, felled last year, at any rate."

Then the school-master came a step nearer, and asked, so pleasantly that the boy became frightened, —

" Have you seen the bears up in the parsonage wood, I ask ? "

Thorvald did not say another word.

" Perhaps your memory did not serve you quite right this time ? " said the school-master, taking the boy by the jacket collar and striking his own side with the ferule.

Thorvald did not say a word ; the other children dared not look that way. Then the school-master said earnestly, —

" It is wicked for a priest's son to tell lies, and still more wicked to teach the poor peasant children to do such things."

And so the boy escaped for that time.

But the next day at school (the teacher had been called up to the priest's and the children were left to themselves) Marit was the first one to ask Thorvald to tell her something about the bear again.

" But you get so frightened," said he.

" Oh, I think I will have to stand it," said she, and moved closer to her brother.

"Ah, now you had better believe it will be shot!" said Thorvald, and nodded his head. "There has come a fellow to the parish who is able to shoot it. No sooner had Lars, the hunter, heard about the bear's den up in the parsonage wood, than he came running through seven whole parishes with a rifle as heavy as the upper mill-stone, and as long as from here to Hans Volden, who sits yonder."

"Mercy!" cried all the children.

"As long?" repeated Thorvald; "yes, it is certainly as long as from here to yonder bench."

"Have you seen it?" asked Ole Böen.

"Have I seen it, do you say? Why, I have been helping to clean it, and that is what Lars will not allow everybody to do, let me tell you. Of course *I* could not lift it, but that made no difference; I only cleaned the lock, and that is not the easiest work, I can tell you."

"People say that gun of Lars's has taken to missing its mark of late," said Hans Volden, leaning back, with both his feet on the desk. 'Ever since that time when Lars shot, up at Osmark, at a bear that was asleep, it misses fire twice and misses the mark the third time."

"Yes, ever since he shot at a bear that was asleep," chimed in the girls.

"The fool!" added the boys.

"There is only one way in which this difficulty with the rifle can be remedied," said Ole Böen, "and that is to thrust a living snake down its barrel."

"Yes, we all know that," said the girls. They wanted to hear something new.

"It is now winter, and snakes are not to be found, and so Lars cannot depend very much upon his rifle," said Hans Volden, thoughtfully.

"He wants Niels Böen along with him, does he not?" asked Thorvald.

"Yes," said the boy from Böen's, who was, of course, best posted in regard to this; "but Niels will get permission neither from his mother nor from his sister. His father certainly died from the wrestle he had with the bear up at the sæter last year, and now they have no one but Niels."

"Is it so dangerous, then?" asked a little boy.

"Dangerous?" cried Thorvald. "The bear has as much sense as ten men, and as much strength as twelve."

"Yes, we know that," said the girls once more. They were bent on hearing something new.

"But Niels is like his father; I dare say he will go along," continued Thorvald.

"Of course he will go along," said Ole Böen; "this morning early, before any one was stirring over yonder at our gard, I saw Niels Böen, Lars the hunter, and one man more, going up the mountain with their rifles. I should not be surprised if they were going to the parsonage wood."

"Was it early?" asked the children, in concert.

"Very early! I was up before mother, and started the fire."

"Did Lars have the long rifle?" asked Hans.

"That I do not know, but the one he had was as long as from here to the chair."

"Oh, what a story!" said Thorvald.

"Why, you said so yourself," answered Ole.

"No, the long rifle which I saw, he will scarcely use any more."

"Well, this one was, at all events, as long — as long — as from here, nearly over to the chair."

"Ah! perhaps he had it with him then after all."

"Just think," said Marit, "now they are up among the bears."

"And at this very moment they may be in a fight," said Thorvald.

Then followed a deep, nay, almost solemn silence.

"I think I will go," said Thorvald, taking his cap.

"Yes! yes! then you will find out something," shouted all the rest, and they became full of life again.

"But the school-master?" said he, and stopped.

"Nonsense! you are the priest's son," said Ole Böen.

"Yes, if the school-master touches me with a finger!" said Thorvald, with a significant nod, in the midst of the deep silence of the rest.

"Will you hit him back?" asked they, eagerly.

"Who knows?" said Thorvald, nodding, and went away.

They thought it best to study while he was gone, but none of them were able to do so, — they had to keep talking about the bear. They began guessing how the affair would turn out. Hans bet with Ole that Lars's rifle had missed fire, and that the bear had sprung at him. Little Knud Pladsen thought they had all fared badly, and the girls took his side. But there came Thorvald.

"Let us go," said he, as he pulled open the door, so excited that he could scarcely speak.

"But the school-master?" asked some of the children.

"The deuce take the school-master! The bear! The bear!" cried Thorvald, and could say no more.

"Is it shot?" asked one, very softly, and the others dared not draw their breath.

Thorvald sat panting for a while, finally he got up, mounted one of the benches, swung his cap, and shouted, —

"Let us go, I say. I will take all the responsibility."

"But where shall we go?" asked Hans.

"The largest bear has been borne down, the others still remain. Niels Böen has been badly hurt, because Lars's rifle missed its mark, and the bears rushed straight at them. The boy who went with them saved himself only by throwing himself flat on the ground, and pretending to be dead, and the bear did not touch him. As soon as Lars and Niels had killed their bear, they shot his also. Hurrah!"

"Hurrah!" shouted all, both girls and boys, and up from their seats, and out through the door, they sprang, and off they ran over field and wood to Böen, as though there was no such thing as a school-master in the whole world.

The girls soon complained that they were not able to keep up, but the boys took them by the hand and away they all rushed.

"Take care not to touch it!" said Thorvald; "it sometimes happens that the bears become alive again."

"Is that so?" asked Marit.

"Yes, and they appear in a new form, so have a care!"

And they kept running.

"Lars shot the largest one ten times before it fell," he began again.

"Just think! ten times!"

And they kept running.

"And Niels stabbed it eighteen times with his knife before it fell!"

"Mercy! what a bear!"

And the children ran so that the sweat poured down from their faces.

Finally they reached the place. Ole Böen pushed the door open and got in first.

"Have a care!" cried Hans after him.

Marit and a little girl that Thorvald and Hans had led between them, were the next ones, and then came Thorvald, who did not go far forward, but remained standing where he could observe the whole scene.

"See the blood!" said he to Hans.

The others hardly knew whether they should venture in just yet.

"Do you see it?" asked a girl of a boy, who stood by her side in the door.

Yes, it is as large as the captain's large horse," answered he, and went on talking to her. It was bound with iron chains, he said, and had even broken the one that had been put about its fore-legs. He could see distinctly that it was alive, and the blood was flowing from it like a waterfall.

Of course, this was not true; but they forgot that when they caught sight of the bear, the rifle, and Niels, who sat there with bandaged wounds after the fight with the bear, and when they heard old Lars the hunter tell how all had happened. So eagerly, and with so much interest did they look and listen, that they did not observe that some one came behind them who also began to tell his story, and that in the following manner: —

"I will teach you to leave the school without my permission, that I will!"

A cry of fright arose from the whole crowd, and out through the door, through the veranda, and out into the yard they ran. Soon they appeared like a lot of black balls, rolling one by one, over the snow-white field, and when the

school-master on his old legs followed them to the school-house, he could hear the children reading from afar off; they read until the walls fairly rattled.

Aye, that was a glorious day, the day when the bear-hunter came home! It began in sunshine and ended in rain, but such days are usually the best growing days.

THE FATHER.

THE man whose story is here to be told was the wealthiest and most influential person in his parish; his name was Thord Överaas. He appeared in the priest's study one day, tall and earnest.

"I have gotten a son," said he, "and I wish to present him for baptism."

"What shall his name be?"

"Finn, — after my father."

"And the sponsors?"

They were mentioned, and proved to be the best men and women of Thord's relations in the parish.

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest, and looked up.

The peasant hesitated a little.

"I should like very much to have him baptized by himself," said he, finally.

"That is to say on a week-day?"

"Next Saturday, at twelve o'clock noon."

"Is there anything else?" inquired the priest.

"There is nothing else;" and the peasant twirled his cap, as though he were about to go.

Then the priest rose. "There is yet this, however," said he, and walking toward Thord, he took him by the hand and looked gravely into his eyes: "God grant that the child may become a blessing to you!"

One day sixteen years later, Thord stood once more in the priest's study.

"Really, you carry your age astonishingly well, Thord," said the priest; for he saw no change whatever in the man.

"That is because I have no troubles," replied Thord.

To this the priest said nothing, but after a while he asked: "What is your pleasure this evening?"

"I have come this evening about that son of mine who is to be confirmed to-morrow."

"He is a bright boy."

"I did not wish to pay the priest until I heard what number the boy would have when he takes his place in church to-morrow."

"He will stand number one."

"So I have heard; and here are ten dollars for the priest."

"Is there anything else I can do for you?" inquired the priest, fixing his eyes on Thord.

"There is nothing else."

Thord went out.

Eight years more rolled by, and then one day a noise was heard outside of the priest's study, for many men were approaching, and at their head was Thord, who entered first.

The priest looked up and recognized him.

"You come well attended this evening, Thord," said he.

"I am here to request that the bans may be published for my son: he is about to marry Karen Storliden, daughter of Gudmund, who stands here beside me."

"Why, that is the richest girl in the parish."

"So they say," replied the peasant, stroking back his hair with one hand.

The priest sat a while as if in deep thought, then entered the names in his book, without making any comments, and the men wrote their signatures underneath. Thord laid three dollars on the table.

"One is all I am to have," said the priest.

"I know that very well; but he is my only child, I want to do it handsomely."

The priest took the money

"This is now the third time, Thord, that you have come here on your son's account."

"But now I am through with him," said Thord, and folding up his pocket-book he said farewell and walked away.

The men slowly followed him.

A fortnight later, the father and son were rowing across the lake, one calm, still day, to Storliden to make arrangements for the wedding.

"This thwart is not secure," said the son, and stood up to straighten the seat on which he was sitting.

At the same moment the board he was standing on slipped from under him; he threw out his arms, uttered a shriek, and fell overboard.

"Take hold of the oar!" shouted the father, springing to his feet and holding out the oar.

But when the son had made a couple of efforts he grew stiff.

"Wait a moment!" cried the father, and began to row toward his son.

Then the son rolled over on his back, gave his father one long look, and sank.

Thord could scarcely believe it; he held the boat still, and stared at the spot where his son had gone down, as though he must surely come to the surface again. There rose some bubbles,

then some more, and finally one large one that burst; and the lake lay there as smooth and bright as a mirror again.

For three days and three nights people saw the father rowing round and round the spot, without taking either food or sleep; he was dragging the lake for the body of his son. And toward morning of the third day he found it, and carried it in his arms up over the hills to his gard.

It might have been about a year from that day, when the priest, late one autumn evening, heard some one in the passage outside of the door, carefully trying to find the latch. The priest opened the door, and in walked a tall, thin man, with bowed form and white hair. The priest looked long at him before he recognized him. It was Thord.

"Are you out walking so late?" said the priest, and stood still in front of him.

"Ah, yes! it is late," said Thord, and took a seat.

The priest sat down also, as though waiting. A long, long silence followed. At last Thord said, —

"I have something with me that I should like to give to the poor; I want it to be invested as a legacy in my son's name."

He rose, laid some money on the table, and sat down again. The priest counted it.

"It is a great deal of money," said he.

"It is half the price of my gard. I sold it to-day."

The priest sat long in silence. At last he asked, but gently, —

"What do you propose to do now, Thord?"

"Something better."

They sat there for a while, Thord with downcast eyes, the priest with his eyes fixed on Thord. Presently the priest said, slowly and softly, —

"I think your son has at last brought you a true blessing."

"Yes, I think so myself," said Thord, looking up, while two big tears coursed slowly down his cheeks.

THE EAGLE'S NEST.

THE Endregards was the name of a small solitary parish, surrounded by lofty mountains. It lay in a flat and fertile valley, and was intersected by a broad river that flowed down from the mountains. This river emptied into a lake, which was situated close by the parish, and presented a fine view of the surrounding country.

Up the Endre-Lake the man had come rowing, who had first cleared this valley; his name was Endre, and it was his descendants who lwelt here. Some said he had fled hither on account of a murder he had committed, and that was why his family were so dark; others said his was on account of the mountains, which shut out the sun at five o'clock of a midsummer afternoon.

Over this parish there hung an eagle's nest. It was built on a cliff far up the mountains; all could see the mother eagle alight in her nest,

but no one could reach it. The male eagle went sailing over the parish, now swooping down after a lamb, now after a kid; once he had also taken a little child and borne it away; therefore there was no safety in the parish as long as the eagle had a nest in this mountain. There was a tradition among the people, that in old times there were two brothers who had climbed up to the nest and torn it down; but nowadays there was no one who was able to reach it.

Whenever two met at the Endregards, they talked about the eagle's nest, and looked up. Every one knew, when the eagles reappeared in the new year, where they had swooped down and done mischief, and who had last endeavored to reach the nest. The youth of the place, from early boyhood, practiced climbing mountains and trees, wrestling and scuffling, in order that one day they might reach the cliff and demolish the nest, as those two brothers had done.

At the time of which this story tells, the best boy at the Endregards was named Leif, and he was not of the Endre family. He had curly hair and small eyes, was clever in all play, and was fond of the fair sex. He early said of himself, that one day he would reach the eagle's

nest; but old people remarked that he should not have said so aloud.

This annoyed him, and even before he had reached his prime he made the ascent. It was one bright Sunday forenoon, early in the summer; the young eagles must be just about hatched. A vast multitude of people had gathered together at the foot of the mountain to behold the feat; the old people advising him against attempting it, the young ones urging him on.

But he hearkened only to his own desires, and waiting until the mother eagle left her nest, he gave one spring into the air, and hung in a tree several yards from the ground. The tree grew in a cleft in the rock, and from this cleft he began to climb upward. Small stones loosened under his feet, earth and gravel came rolling down, otherwise all was still, save for the stream flowing behind, with its suppressed, ceaseless murmur. Soon he had reached a point where the mountain began to project; here he hung long by one hand, while his foot groped for a sure resting-place, for he could not see. Many, especially women, turned away, saying he would never have done this had he had parents living. He found footing at last, however sought again, now with the hand, now with

the foot, failed, slipped, then hung fast again. They who stood below could hear one another breathing.

Suddenly there rose to her feet, a tall, young girl, who had been sitting on a stone apart from the rest; it was said that she had been betrothed to Leif from early childhood, although he was not of her kindred. Stretching out her arms she called aloud: "Leif, Leif, why do you do this?" Every eye was turned on her. Her father, who was standing close by, gave her a stern look, but she heeded him not. "Come down again, Leif," she cried; "I love you, and there is nothing to be gained up there!"

They could see that he was considering; he hesitated a moment or two, and then started onward. For a long time all went well, for he was sure-footed and had a strong grip; but after a while it seemed as if he were growing weary, for he often paused. Presently a little stone came rolling down as a harbinger, and every one who stood there had to watch its course to the bottom. Some could endure it no longer, and went away. The girl alone still stood on the stone, and wringing her hands continued to gaze upward.

Once more Leif took hold with one hand

but it slipped; she saw this distinctly; then he tried the other; it slipped also. "Leif!" she shouted, so loud that her voice rang through the mountains, and all the others chimed in with her. "He is slipping!" they cried, and stretched up their hands to him, both men and women. He was indeed slipping, carrying with him sand, stones, and earth; slipping, continually slipping, ever faster and faster. The people turned away, and then they heard a rustling and scraping in the mountain behind them, after which, something fell with a heavy thud, like a great piece of wet earth.

When they could look round again, he was lying there crushed and mutilated beyond recognition. The girl had fallen down on the stone, and her father took her up in his arms and bore her away.

The youths who had taken the most pains to incite Leif to the perilous ascent now dared not lend a hand to pick him up; some were even unable to look at him. So the old people had to go forward. The eldest of them, as he took hold of the body, said: "It is very sad · but," he added, casting a look upward, "it is, after all, well that something hangs so high that it cannot be reached by every one."

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